

IMPRESSIONS
AND REMINISCENCES

IN MEMORIAM

BY GEORGE SAND.



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IMPRESSIONS

AND

REMINISCENCES.

BY

GEORGE SAND.

TRANSLATED BY H. K. ADAMS.

WITH MEMOIR.



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1877.

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IN MEMORIAM.

MADAME AMANTINE LUCILE AURORE-DUDEVANT, better known by her pseudonyme "George Sand," was the daughter of the Marquis Maurice Dupin de Franceuil. She was born at Paris, July 5, 1804, and died there June 8, 1876. She was brought up at the Château de Nohant by her grandmother, the Comtesse de Horn, a woman of strong intellect. Her theories influenced the training of the young Aurore, who, at the age of fifteen, could ride and dance with ease and grace, handle a gun, or flourish a sword, with equal dexterity. At fifteen she was placed at the Convent of the Augustines Anglaises, at Paris, for the purpose of receiving religious instruction. Her imagination was captivated by the Roman Catholic faith; and she embraced it with her whole soul. After the death of her grandmother, and under the dictation of her family, she, in 1822, married the Baron Dudevant, a man of mature years, and little calculated to interest the affections of a young wife. The

fortune of his youthful bride enabled him to carry out his agricultural schemes; but he did not appear sensible to the fact, that with her natural vigor of mind, and sensibility of character, she was leading a monotonous and hopeless existence.

Resolving to divert her mind from her melancholy lot, she sought the society of such friends as she could assemble around her. Among these was M. Jules Sandeau, a young law-student who spent a vacation at Nohant, and was the first to inspire her with a longing for literary distinction. It would seem that feelings of doubt and suspicion aggravated the harsh characteristics of her husband; for their life became insupportable to both, and his wife, by the sacrifice of her fortune, procured his assent to a separation. She hastened to Paris, and once more entered the Convent of the Augustines Anglaises; but her mind had become too much habituated to excitement to rest quietly in so calm a haven, and she longed to share in the busy turmoil of life. Her next transition was to a little garret in the Quai St. Michel at Paris, where she had to struggle against absolute poverty, and formed plans with M. Jules Sandeau, whose worldly circumstances were no better than her own, for the supply of each day's necessities. Having a little skill in painting, Mme. Dudevant was induced to accept employment occasionally offered

by a toy-vender, in ornamenting candlesticks and sruff-boxes. But this wearisome and ill-paid work disgusted her; and the two aspirants for fortune resolved to seek advice from M. Latouche, the editor of "Figaro," who suggested literature as a profession, and encouraged them to write for his own paper. This led to the curious literary partnership which so greatly mystified the Parisian press.

A series of articles in "Figaro" were followed by a novel called "Rose et Blanche," to which was appended the signature of "Jules Sand." The authors received eighty dollars for this manuscript, and for a time led a life of ease and gayety. It was at this period that Mme. Dudevant first gave offence by donning male attire, assumed by her for greater independence of action. Being soon again in straitened circumstances, Mme. Dudevant was advised to revisit Berri for the purpose of obtaining a legal separation, or at least an alimentary allowance, from her husband. Previous to her departure, says one of her biographers, she arranged with M. Sandeau the plan of a novel, certain portions of which were to be completed by each before their next meeting. The student did not fulfil his share of the undertaking; but on her return Mme. Dudevant surprised him with the complete manuscript of "Indiana," which was sold for a hundred and twenty dollars,

and met with rapid success. It introduced to the public the name of "George Sand;" for M. Sandeau, unwilling to accept a share of the distinction he had neglected to earn, refused to permit their ordinary pen-name to be used in this instance. Her next two novels were "Valentine" and "Lélia," the latter being published in the "Revue des Deux Mondes" in 1833. In 1834 she travelled through Italy in company with Alfred de Musset; and she afterward wrote "Les Lettres d'un Voyageur," wherein she gave an entertaining account of her journey, as well as her opinions on various subjects. This book was followed by "Jacques," "Andre," and "Le Secrétaire," three novels of considerable merit. Returning to France in 1835, she met Michel de Bourges, the eloquent lawyer, who drew her into politics; Laménais, with whom she debated the higher questions of religion; and Pierre Leroux, who initiated her into the doctrines of socialism. Their influence was perceptible in several of her subsequent works, such as "Simon," "Spiridon," and "Consuelo."

In 1838 Mme. Dudevant obtained a decree by which she was legally separated from her husband, and restored to the management of her fortune and the guardianship of her two children. Her life now became comparatively settled. She made Nohant a resort for her friends, and attended to her children's

education, without neglecting her literary labors. In 1838, for the benefit of her son's health, she spent a winter in Majorca, where she was accompanied by the pianist Chopin. In 1845 she turned her pen to new and more congenial subjects, and produced pastoral novels unparalleled for charm, simplicity, and artlessness.

The revolutionary movement of 1848 enlisted the ardent sympathies of "George Sand." She is said to have written newspaper articles defending the measures of Ledru-Rollin, then a member of the Provisional Government; but a few months afterward she returned to her country home and literary pursuits. In 1854 she published in the "Presse" newspaper an interesting autobiography. A detailed list of her works would occupy considerable space. Besides a large number of popular novels, "George Sand" was author of several plays, some of which achieved great success. Her plays, before being represented in Paris, were usually acted and criticised in a little theatre attached to her château.

The position of "George Sand" in European literature may be judged by the opinion of some of her distinguished contemporaries. Thackeray said of her, "Her style is noble, and beautifully rich and pure. She has an exuberant imagination, and with it a very chaste style of expression. She never scarcely

indulges in declamation, and yet her sentences are exquisitely melodious and full. She leaves you at the end of one of her brief, rich, melancholy sentences, with plenty of food for future cogitation. I can't express to you the charm of them: they seem to me like the sound of country bells falling sweetly and sadly upon the ear." The German poet Heine wrote, "She has naturalness, taste, a strong love of truth, enthusiasm; and all these qualities are linked together by the most severe, as also the most perfect, harmony. The genius of Mme. George Sand has an amplitude exquisitely beautiful. Whatever she feels or thinks breathes grace, and makes you dream of immense deeps. Her style is a revelation of pure and melodious form." George H. Lewes said, "No man could have written her books; for no man could have had her experience, even with a genius equal to her own. Both philosopher and critic must perceive that these writings of hers are original, are genuine, are transcripts of experience, and, as such, fulfil the primary condition of all literature." Michelet called her "the grand *prosa-teur* of the nineteenth century." John Stuart Mill declared that, "as a specimen of purely artistic excellence, there is not in all modern literature any thing superior to the prose of Mme. Sand, whose style acts upon the nervous system like a symphony

of Haydn or Mozart.” Reviewing her career, Justin McCarthy said, “George Sand is probably the most influential writer of our day. Her genius has been felt as a power in every country where people read any manner of books. She is beyond comparison the greatest living novelist of France, and has won this position by the most legitimate application of the gifts of an artist. With all her marvellous fecundity, she has hardly ever given to the world any work which does not seem, at least, to have been the subject of the most elaborate and patient care. The prose of George Sand stands out conspicuous for its wonderful expressiveness and force, its almost perfect beauty. She is, after Rousseau, the one only great French author who has looked directly and lovingly into the face of Nature, and learned the secrets which skies and waters, fields and lanes, can teach to the heart that loves them. Gifts such as these have won her the almost unrivalled place which she holds in living literature. There is hardly a woman’s heart anywhere in the civilized world which has not felt the vibration of George Sand’s thrilling voice.”

“The London Saturday Review” paid this tribute to her genius: “In France, of all the novel-writers of the last twenty years, the most instructive, the most genuine, the most original, is George Sand.

Her best works remain, and will long remain, among the most characteristic and the most splendid monuments of that outpouring of French literature, the period of which happened to be exactly conterminous with the duration of constitutional government in France." Lastly, her own countryman, Edmond About, termed hers "the noblest mind of our epoch." — *New York Tribune*.



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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.

1871.

TO CHARLES EDMOND:—

I ACKNOWLEDGE that, every evening, I am simple enough to record, in more or less words, the events of the day; and this I have done for twenty years. It does not follow, however, that this journal merits publication; and I doubt if even a few of its pages would be worth the trouble.

On reviewing it, I am convinced that it would be principally interesting to myself, resembling, as it does, a journal from shipboard; for we live, for the most part, in the country; and this life is similar to that on a ship that is lying-to.

Nevertheless, since you urge it, I will make the attempt, on condition that you will stop me as soon as it becomes tiresome or childish; but I ask permission to fish at will in those mysterious waters which have swallowed so many objects without leaving any distinct trace of their existence. I am fond of fiction, and willingly resign to it my personality. It does not,

however, occupy my whole time; and I waste a large portion in revery, without a thought which could be made practical or manifest. I should hardly know how to describe this kind of internal action, to which every one yields in his own way, and which is infinitely varied according to one's temperament, character, years, and surroundings. Perhaps, in this sense, certain pages of this journal may have the value of a study which each one can pursue for himself.

It would be impossible to confine myself to a systematic course; for to connect logically, day by day, twenty years of my life, would be the labor of twenty years more; and I have too many things to see and understand, — I, who am not quick at comprehension, — to devote the now rather limited term of my life to the knowledge and understanding of myself. When these loose pages form the leaves of a book, it will be the result of some slight desire that I have felt to promulgate an idea.

IMPRESSIONS AND REMINISCENCES.

CHAPTER I.

WINTER AT HOME.

JAN. 23, 1863, 5.30, P.M.

THE sunset sky behind the dark yet well-defined network of the tall and leafless linden-trees is of an orange red. The moon is almost at the zenith, and presents the dim outline of three quarters. One edge is distinctly visible: the other is lost, as it were, in the foggy distance. In the little visual field presented by this star are hundreds of leagues of perspective. How small a proportion of space is occupied by a world!

The constellation of Orion, brilliant as the diamond, is rising behind the moon, in the cold blue sky; and, lower down, Sirius sheds its white quivering light over the summit of the trees in the garden. The shadow thrown by the pines

upon the gravel is clear and steadfast. Are the violets in blossom? I have not seen any, but the fresh air is impregnated with their odor.

How charming is this winter! From my open window I behold on my right hand the dying rays of the sunset, and on my left the solemn approach of night. The air is not cold; and, were it not for the position of the stars, one might fancy that it were April. But no! This lovely silence is not the imprudent announcement of spring. It is so profound that I dare not move, for fear of disturbing it. I would take a walk before dinner, but I might cause some derangement in nature: besides, I should hear my own footsteps; the charm would be broken.

I have spent half an hour in this silent contemplation, mechanically holding my breath in the surrounding quiet. My life seemed, as it were, suspended without and within. I could think only of those violets which lie concealed by day, but betray themselves at night by their subtle perfume. They need not fear: I will not attempt to gather them.

The dinner-bell has just rung. There was nothing sharp or clamorous in its sound, but it set the dog to barking. The dog is a timid, sus-

picious being, full of visions and terrors, uttering cries of distress without any apparent cause. The moon on the horizon drives him to despair. He pays no attention to the white stars, but has an evident aversion to the red planets. No doubt he has perceptions of which we are unconscious. White walls frighten him at twilight. He is the dupe of shadows, and constantly tormented by fancies. This is the effect of a vivid imagination, without the capacity for visual enjoyment.

Midnight.—A—— has just raised a scene, because I risked taking cold at the open window. This excellent man cannot understand that it is better to have a cold in his head than to deprive his soul of a sublime joy. I try in vain to describe to him this quiet enjoyment arising from contemplation. He is enraged at logic, and begs for words that define; but I can find none to define so vague a feeling.

Nevertheless I try to answer his questions.

“Does it require half an hour to behold one of Nature's pictures? Does not the picture change every second during that half-hour?”

“It is this very change, rapid yet imperceptible, that I like to watch.”

“What good does it do you? This change is

the despair of painters, who may seek in vain to fix the effect."

"I find enjoyment where the painter finds despair. I behold a scene always fresh, and not subject to the merciless and uncertain law of solution."

"But that does not serve art. You cannot portray a position which is constantly changing. You are forced to seize it at a given moment, or to reproduce merely its principal phases."

"That is very true; but I have never thought of attempting a description. Such things do not take so strong a hold on our feelings at the moment as afterwards,—that is, provided they have made a deep impression; but the most thorough appreciation does not need to be communicated."

"That is to say, that what you feel most ardently you do not commit to writing?"

"I believe so."

"For my part, I see nothing when I am alone. I do not look."

"You do not care to see?"

"Precisely. It would make me sorrowful. I should begin to cry perhaps, like the dog, whose nerves are irritated by the moon. I must feel

human life around me, the life of my own species : that of beings with whom I cannot hold communion awakens within me an indifference, almost an antipathy. With you, then, it is the reverse ? ”

“ How do I know ? ”

“ That is not an answer.”

“ If my answer must give rise to a discussion, I prefer to remain silent, and leave you to infer that I possess a grain of folly. The discussion of certain internal and self-gratifying perceptions resembles profanation. What would you think of a painter, who, to make a more exact copy of the color of a plum, should wipe away the bloom which covers it ? There is a bloom cast over certain impressions. It is like a veil of freshness, which I do not like to disturb.”

He retired, saying that he respected my fancy, but should never understand it. He would like, artist that he is in another sense, to pursue the normal and rational course. I believe that he is attempting an impossibility. Every one must take his own course. There are artists, though, who have none ; and I am, perhaps, of that class. Whether it be an advantage or infirmity, I know not ; but, having found infinite joys in my mode of perception, I confess that I should be unwilling to lose them.

A friend who talks with me sometimes, on this subject, assures me that the analysis of my inmost self would not deprive me of those joys which he calls mysterious, because, he says, I make myself a mystery to myself. He believes that a pleasure is appreciated according as we know in what it consists. But this pleasure is not at my disposal. I can seat myself at the window, some splendid night, to notice the distribution of light and shade, to discover what constitutes the beauty of the hour and the place, to listen to the song of the nocturnal bird; in short, to witness the little wonders of the outward world, without identifying myself with them. My individual self, then, lives its own life, which is not one perpetual enchantment, since it is subject to a round of duties and obligations in which I have no right to seek my own gratification at the expense of that of others. Those moments when, transported and borne beyond myself by the power of external objects, I can withdraw myself from the life of my fellow-creatures, are entirely casual; and it is not always in my power to transfer my mind into other beings than myself. When this phenomenon is produced spontaneously, I cannot tell whether I am pre-

pared for it by any particular circumstance, psychological or physiological. Most surely there must be an absence of all absorbing thoughts. The least cause for solicitude banishes this kind of internal ecstacy, which is, as it were, an involuntary oblivion, unforeseen by my own vitality.

Surely every one has experienced something of this kind; but I should like to meet with a person who could say to me, "I have experienced it in the same manner. There are hours when I withdraw from myself, when I live in a planet, when I feel myself grass, a bird, the top of a tree, a cloud, running water, the horizon, color, form and sensations wavering, variable, indefinite; hours when I run, I fly, I swim, I sip the dew, I expand in the sunlight, I sleep beneath the leaves, I soar with the lark, I crawl with the lizard, I shine with the stars, and glow with the brilliant verse; when, in short, I gain an insight into the midst of a development which is like a dilation of my own being."

I have never met this individual; at least, not to my knowledge. If I had, I should not have dared to question him, not always liking to be questioned myself. We may walk every day by the side of our translator without suspecting it, or without feeling disposed to deliver him our text.

Nevertheless it would have given me pleasure to meet such an one, on condition that he were more learned than I, and could have told me whether these phenomena are the result of a certain condition of the body, or the mind; if it is the instinct of that universal life which physically asserts its rights over the individual, or if it is a higher relationship, an intellectual relationship with the soul of the universe, which is revealed to that individual who is delivered, at certain hours, from the bonds of personality. It is my opinion that it partakes of both, that it cannot be otherwise. I should be afraid of a medical explanation, which would inform me that this sort of hallucination was owing exclusively to the circulation of the blood, and might be accounted for by an attack of fever. I cannot say what things the learned *do* know, but I can say very well what things they do *not* know.

Whatever it be, there is within the human being a double mechanism of action and re-action, the operation of which it would be curious to be able to observe; but it baffles investigation, even in one's own self. I have never read nor heard of any thing satisfactory concerning the correlation of the thought that conceives its object, with the

object conceived. He who would explain it ignores that part of his mechanism which is not that of another, and asserts the peculiar operations of his own mind, without questioning whether these do not differ in the multitude of infinitely diversified organizations, whether even in the same individual they do not vary every day. How does it happen that the food which we relished yesterday becomes distasteful to-day? So it is with all *intellectual* food. Both it and we are subject to change.

On reflection at three o'clock in the morning, —this is the hour for lucid recapitulation, in summer especially, just at the dawn of day and the awakening of things in general, — the problem which tormented A—— last evening, and, I must confess, puzzled me a little, seems quite simple. We are not abstract beings; and, moreover, there is nothing abstract in our composition. Our existence feeds on its surroundings, — air, heat, moisture, light, electricity, the vitality of others, and influences of all sorts. These influences are necessary for the expansion of our lives; they are *ourselves* while life endures. We are earth and sky, cloud and dust; neither angels nor beasts, but a product of the two, with the

thought of one and the instinct of the other rendered more intense. We are not creatures so wrapped up in the ideal as to lose all will and freedom; neither are we creatures entirely absorbed in concern for the preservation of our species, or submissive to an unalterable course.

But our direct and intimate relationship with the spiritual and the animal becomes apparent to us in proportion to the exertions which we make to belong to ourselves. We study the spiritual, that is, the serene and divine portion of the universal soul. We observe the animal, which comprises also the plant, a being without apparent locomotion. And, by giving our earnest attention to this examination, we are brought to feel the power still exercised over us by our manifold generators, beings or bodies. I am not dreaming, then, when, standing before a great edifice of rocks, I feel that these mighty bones of the earth are mine, and that the calmness of my mind partakes of their apparent death and their dramatic immobility. The moon consumes the stones, so says the peasant. I maintain that they drink the cold light of the moon, but undergo a silent disintegration during the night from having been subjected to the wasting action

of the sun. I think of the hidden work going on in their molecules, and I feel inclined to attribute to them an existence similar to my own. I, too, am a stone, which time disintegrates; and the tranquillity of these blocks, whose sole function is to submit to the action of day and night, deeply impresses me, calms me, and benumbs my vitality. Why include in the daily task so much that is useless? Eternal destruction, which, in another form, presides over reconstruction, is more active, since it is uninterrupted, than my fettered will can ever be. To die is not to become dead, but to serve in a new formation. It is merely a change of action; and if action continues in the stone, that apparent embodiment of insensibility and death, why distress myself at the inevitable transfer of my patience into an inert patience? Suppose that I have no soul, — that is to say, that no vitality capable of reconstructing the human condition survives me: I am sure of leaving my stone upon the sand, a passive bone which will be transformed, through natural influences, into some element of vitality. If the stone which has contributed in the formation of my bones, by furnishing the calcareous properties which are the foundation of my human

frame, is an ancestor that I cannot disown, that I regard with a certain respect, poetical and rational, the plant, which is an organism decidedly my predecessor upon the earth, has a right to my admiration; not merely by its grace and beauty, but by the part that it performs in my existence. To a certain point, it lives a life analogous to mine. It has no voluntary motion, but, acting through its growth, reaches the same end by a process which is at once motion and production. If it needs a more propitious soil, a greater or less degree of light, it forms, from its own substance, branches, tendrils, or strong roots; securing, at the same time, the means and the end.

It escapes death by a sort of suicide. The sap abandons the suffering stem, flowing to another part of the plant, where it throws out new shoots. The roots will not lay aside their work to help the germ, until they have attained a favorable position. What more beautiful manifestation of vitality? When *we* lose a member, we lose also the action of that member. The *vegetable* makes for itself a new member, which progresses as it forms: still more, it creates a new body, and transports its whole life to some other spot. We

ought not, then, to despise it on account of its inertia. To change its position, it exerts the most vigorous effort conceivable.

The power of beings impresses you, then ; and you cannot observe them without admiring them. Admiration is one form of affection. Egotism seeks what gives it pleasure. It is plain, then, that by entering, through observation, into the life of the plant, we feel so much more the force and solidity of life universal. Does not the perfume of flowers penetrate our mind, as well as our bodily organ ? Is it a purely physical gratification ? Do we not closely associate it with ideas of purity and poetry, with an elevated perception of nature and of life ?

If we extend our observations to the more complete life of those beings which people our midst, to all animals, large or small, noisy or mysterious, that, from the lowest depths of the earth to the summit of the loftiest trees and the region of air, live and move, we are amazed at the diversity of their functions. All are admirably ingenious ; and, as all these things are beautiful or interesting in their mode of existence, we are involuntarily transported into that existence, which apparently withdraws us from the perception of

our own, but in reality strengthens and completes it. Who has not longed for the wings of a bird? I would be modest enough to be satisfied with the feet of the hare, or the comparatively immense bounds of the grasshopper. I take an interest, too, in the little, hidden existence of the field-cricket, whose apartment is so warm, so neat, and its harlequin mask so serious, so comic. It holds a tambourine under its wings, and seems as happy as a savage, with its constant repetition of the same note. What gayety, what madness, is displayed at evening, in a flowery meadow, when all the insects of the field, in a feeling of security derived from the absence of man, noisily mingle their various dialects in a general conversation! Do we not feel like stopping to listen, for want of being able to join in their demonstrations? But, as to describe that incessant and prolific action which constitutes the charm of nature would require more time than to feel and appreciate it, I shall venture to tell A—— to-morrow, that literary descriptions are but poor expressions of the half of what we feel, and that there is more pleasure in sitting still than in writing.

A pleasure, however, which must have its limitations, not only from fear of taking cold, but

because the duties of life — I must retire now. This is not the hour to be burdened with human cares. To-morrow will bring its task, and I shall need sleep. To-morrow, perhaps, I shall be so occupied with the cares of life that I shall not heed the insects as they fly, the flowers as they grow, or the clouds as they pass.

JULY, 1871.

To speak frankly, was the foregoing worth the trouble of writing it? It is in reality metaphysics for the use of poets; but, as it is not reduced to the language of metaphysicians, they are the very ones who will understand it least. The poets will find it either too realistic or too idealistic. Many things, I think, may be written, as they occur, for our own perusal; but, if we are invited to publish them, all we can do is to surrender them to the critic without giving a thought to their defence, and dedicate them to those who, with ingenuity, are puzzling out the enigma of life, without priding themselves on having found the solution.

CHAPTER II.

THE STATE OF MY MIND.

PARIS, March, 1876.

.

THESE good old friends ask me *in what state* is my mind? If they could read it at all hours, they would perhaps find that it is in a state of grace, as the Catholics say. I should say that it is in no particular state. It has entered, long ago, that road where accidents and dangers prevent a return. I am thought too indulgent towards the affairs and the people of these times. I am not as indulgent as is believed, but have acquired only such an amount of patience as I found necessary : that is all. After having passed judgment, I have no desire to punish what I condemn : I prefer to forget it. Is this lassitude, or nonchalance? Perhaps it savors of disgust. They say that I am not suited to the present times ; that I must suffer from the change that has taken place, within the last ten years, in the prog-

ress of ideas. What does one not suffer in the contemplation of reality? But we should never yield to a fruitless sorrow. Reflection, after laying us low, ought to raise us again. They avow that reflection saddens them; but let them reflect still more, and they will experience that slight internal joy, which prompts them to say, "I taste what is good and true in life; I have no relish for what is false and poisonous. Now that I am able to discern the *true*, nothing can prevent me from making it a means of sustenance."

I call it a *slight* joy, because every joy which is exclusively our own is incomplete. There is no true happiness of a small number. The happiness of all is necessary as a corollary to domestic happiness. It is essential, too, for the security of existence. Ah, well! the security of the future. That future is dark. That *coup d'état*, which, in the hands of a truly logical man, might have aroused within us a feeling of submission, or of revolt in the way of progress, has only brought us to a subsidence tumultuous at the surface, rotten below. The Frenchman likes to live fast: he takes little thought for the future, and forgets the past. What he wants is intensity of emotion for each day. Furnish him with emotion of what-

ever kind, he swallows it. Whether the wine be pure or adulterated, he drinks, and becomes intoxicated. If he is deprived of the conditions of a normal life, he enters upon a factitious one; and, the more uncongenial it is, the more tenacious is his hold. In times of revolution he is inordinately excited, and, in his efforts to reach the light, is precipitated into darkness. In times of peace, he wastes no thought on what has so recently stirred up his feelings, but gives himself up to etiolation. Slow suicide constitutes, with him, one manner of life. Many young people of to-day acknowledge, without shame, that they have accepted the *rôle* of representatives of decadence; they even feel it the part of courage to make this assertion. And this is the French nation, the very first in the world though. They are warned of their approaching end; and all the reply that they offer is, that they are ready to march gayly to the tomb, preferring to perish rather than reflect.

They are in a fatal current. '48 was for them an infatuation and a deception. "Let them restore to us," said the people, "the intoxication of pleasure, the easy life, the means of enriching ourselves, and the freedom of self-destruction;

let them give us food for our desires, since a desire for the public welfare has led merely to the abortion of our aspirations. Let us amuse ourselves, let us strive for that luxury which enriches the laborer, and ruins the capitalist, thus levelling all conditions. What, in the main, is most democratic, is the prodigality of the rich."

By this specious reasoning, in which the majority of the nation delight, the social classes have been, for the last ten years, approaching a decomposition very curious to observe. They still continue to make use of the old words, without perceiving that they no longer express the same meaning. What is the present signification of *noblesse*, *bourgeoisie*, *prolétariat*? They designate three classes no longer existing in the same condition as under the reign of Louis Philippe, — three classes so transformed, that, if a man who had been dead for fifteen or twenty years were to return to life, he would fail to recognize them.

What has become of that good Parisian *bourgeois*, whose tame solid existence Balzac understood so well, and knew how to idealize? And that other, the provincial *bourgeois*, who afforded us such amusement when we were young artists, and who had such a strong affinity for the Parisian

shopkeeper, — we called him then a *mollusk*. There was, at that time, a considerable number of mollusks in France, whom we compared to those calcareous chains of petrified infusoria, of which our soil is largely composed, and which make up many of our principal geographical features. These elements of resistance to the modifications of the surface were of serious importance. As agriculturists or manufacturers, they held a decided influence over the people, feigning, at least, to join in the common cause. King Louis Philippe understood this, and made the *bourgeoisie* the base of his edifice.

One fine day it crumbled. He did not foresee, that by becoming too predominant it would dissolve. So the Revolution of February did not find that haughty and stubborn class which it expected to oppose. The *bourgeoisie* had made its fortune, and cared no longer for revolutions. Its rôle of 1830 was finished. It had no longer any fixed rules of government, possessed no philosophy, no spirit of caste, and no longer clung together. By trying to grasp too much, it had lost every thing. '89, although constantly mentioned, became incomprehensible. Enriched by this first Revolution, it had grown to be aristo-

cratic, eager for honors and titles, but devout and *well-disposed*, as it was termed by those in high position, under the Restoration. This entire change having removed all necessity for its existence, it became extinct, — that famous party which had wished to be all in all, but only succeeded in forming one element mingled with others composing the wealthy and moderately wealthy classes.

This morbid vanity has become a dangerous malady under the Empire. The *bourgeoisie*, who ought to have felt flattered by having a *parvenu* upon the throne, — for so the Emperor maliciously styles himself, — now does not wish to be *parvenu*. It seeks for ancestors, and assumes titles, or, to say the least, a prefix, and thinks this *gentility*. It is not only pious: it professes to be clerical. Our foolish provincial women make an ostentation of their charity, which likens them to the *ladies* of those times when they, the *bourgeoises*, were called *mademoiselle*, although married. They form themselves into a propaganda of noble women for the purpose of establishing schools to be kept by sisters of charity. Whether kneeling in churches, or marching in processions by the side of titled ladies, they never think of invoking

holy equality before God, but only of the effect that they are producing on their vexed and insignificant fellow-citizens, as they file along on an equality with the countesses.

This stupid pride had its origin in the former reign. The husbands laughed at it, but did not interfere, taking a malicious pride in seeing their daughters, and sometimes their wives, courted by the gentlemen in the neighborhood. Under the Empire they feel *themselves* gentlemen. They have no longer to struggle against the conquered, but to raise them with a fraternal embrace. Although a *parvenu*, the Emperor has caused to be published a genealogy of the young Countess de Teba, tracing back her nobility to the Cid of Andalusia. It was not enough that Mlle. Montijo was beautiful and charming: she must also have ancestors, to satisfy this monarch who boasts of having none himself.

Let us now consider this young empress; for she holds an important position. She brings with her the little Spanish arts, a taste for strong emotions, regret at leaving the bull-fight, not to say the *autos-da-fé*; plays with her fan, exhibits a passion for dress, powders her hair with gold-dust, has a tapering waist; in short, possesses every

attraction, including that of goodness, which could appeal to the imagination, the senses, or the heart. All the men are in love with her; and those who cannot aspire to the slightest amount of favor try to make of their wives empresses in common life. These good women do their best to imitate the beautiful Eugénie. They powder their hair, both real and artificial, with gold or with brass; they paint their cheeks, and have slender waists and small feet. The time has passed when the nation could be recognized by their feet. The nobility has been mixed up with so many alliances, legitimate or illegitimate, that they do not descend by families and kinds, but by simple varieties of the same species. Besides, a life of refinement establishes new surroundings, which modify the organizations. And, then, there is Darwin's law of selection. Any individual more distinguished than the others will do for the founder of a family. So the grandmother who wore wooden shoes had a daughter who wore leather ones; and now the granddaughter wears slippers with heels. If the Chinese fashion of cramping the foot were to be introduced into France, every one would conform to it; and they will hardly stop short of that folly.

And so this infatuation has seized all these

good and beautiful creatures, who might have remained such true and charming women, and brought up their children to respect their ancestors, mechanics or laborers. But they willingly accept the condition of animals, if they may only gaze upon their brilliant sovereign. She, in her turn, laughs at their folly, and, becoming disgusted with her finery because they have copied it, invents some change, which makes the husbands a fresh expense.

This is said to be a benefit to commerce. By no means. Such a step is too abnormal not to engender ruin. The fashions changing every month by a decree of court, the goods not disposed of encumber the factories, or else suddenly fall in price. The effect of this is felt by the retailers. There is not a store where you could not buy the luxuries of the preceding year at half price. Merchants used to rely on country sales; but now look at the *grisettes*, even of the small towns, and the peasants who are choosing a trousseau for their young people! They can go very quickly to Paris for information, now that railways have done away with all local obstacles. In the same manner, the thirst for enjoyment has destroyed the elements of aristoc-

racy; and whoever makes money becomes polished, free to do as he likes.

There is now no *bourgeoisie*. This death, with that of its elder sister nobility, has been added to the record of historical mortalities. There remain but two classes: one consumes, the other produces; one is rich, or moderately so, the other is poor or miserable. What will be their end?

The rich class are joyously hurrying on toward catastrophes, inevitable historical fatalities, the nature of which I would not undertake to predict. Will they be overturned by some new order of the party bearing another name? The best prediction is, that time will open their eyes, and show them upon what volcanoes they are enjoying their dance. If they will but consider how fragile is the toy which serves them for a sceptre; if, warned by the rumbling from the abyss, they will renounce their vanities and vices, — they may yet find the means of coalescing with the people, before a final struggle puts it beyond their power. If not — ah! what will become of them, — Byzantinism or middle age?

Let us now consider the common people. These form a rather mysterious and more complicated class. Popular fancies — seldom realized — do

not reach the sunlight in times of compression.
(Oppression?)

I believe in a great future for the French people; but I assign no fixed time for its development. They are the best and most amiable people on the earth; but this healthy and robust body has its terrible diseases, and could easily be inoculated with the leprosy or the plague. Before realizing the height of my expectations, it may have to pass through crises of which I dare not think.

It is to-day in that phase of development, when, having passed beyond the artlessness of childhood, we are still far from manly wisdom. There is in the individual life a period of sad experiences. It would seem that the *prolétariat* understood, just before February, that social reforms are not instituted by anger, and that, exhortations to violence leading to acts of violence, it ought to reflect, become better acquainted with its rights, obtain more accurate information as to the state of public opinion, and acquire a just idea of its duties towards the majority; for the *prolétariat* of which I am speaking, the *prolétariat* militant, is now but a feeble minority in France; but this minority is strengthened by secret societies; and

whether it already possesses, or is still in search of, its rallying-word, the time will come, sooner or later, when it will constitute a class, if not more powerful than the *bourgeoisie*, at least more numerous and more daring. We fear no risk when we have nothing to lose.

The memorable annals of this *prolétariat*, under Louis Philippe, were unknown in aristocratic circles, and served the rich classes simply for a subject of merriment. It had its poets, its economists, and its apostles, *naïve* and ignorant, but occasionally inspired, and striving hard for improvement. In those times the workman was modest; not humble, but sincere and touching, when he said, "I know nothing, I speak badly, and write incorrectly; but I breathe, I have a heart, and I hope. Help us, and we shall improve. We have the minds of children in the bodies of men. Love us, and we are ready to reciprocate that love. What we most desire is to be happy, without infringing upon the happiness of others."

There were more of such men than may be supposed, scattered about in different quarters, some of them possessing good and noble dispositions. They ought to have been encouraged,

aided, in their legitimate influence over their brother-laborers. I feel sure that the education of the *prolétaire* might have been effected by the proper means; but for this there was no desire. He was laughed at, humiliated, feared, before he became dangerous. He *is* so now. Revolutions are exceptional crises, when the will becomes excited, and the ideas resemble fruit trying to ripen before the tree has put forth its leaves. When a class is reduced to despair, it is always the fault of those classes which have not prevented it,—a fault always punished, and yet constantly recurring.

I warned you, my friends, but you did not listen. You treated me as a dreamer, a poet; yet worthy men had had their times of influence over the people. *Patience* and *Pierre Huguenin*, you maintained, were flattered portraits. It seemed to me that art wished it so; and yet you knew that these portraits were not mere fancies. Ah! if a little ideality mingled with much wisdom could have enlightened the *bourgeoisie* power at the right time, how many disasters and mistakes might have been prevented! But the blind destiny has been accomplished, and the frightful crises have had their effect. The rich class

permitted an innovation, the *bourgeois* empire, which promised not to be military, and, by becoming seriously democratic, might have thrown a bridge across the abyss. At first this seemed its programme; but, unable to maintain it, it fell into the same error as the Bourbons of Naples, governing not *for* the people, but *by* the people. Hence the people that we now see, or, rather, that we do *not* see, who are seeking, in an underhand way, for those solutions which must one day be taken into consideration. If they would seek these earnestly, if they were able to pursue them with patience, they might reach a happy result; but, like the *bourgeoisie*, they have launched into a life of unrestraint, with much work to be done, that is, much money to be gained, and no fixed course, each one for his own interest; with many opportunities for pleasure and means of development for the few who seek art in luxury, science in trade, and instruction in gratified curiosity; but, for the larger portion, means of corruption. The child has been set at liberty before it could understand the limit of its rights. The Empire, by relying upon a *plébiscité*, has inaugurated a reign of ignorance, and resorts to force when this becomes troublesome. The

people have believed themselves king ; but, if this illusion still exists, it will not last long ; and beware then of the disenchantment !

It will be terrible. At the present time, the majority is in favor of empire, persecuting and insulting those who oppose ; and, sad to say, these latter act with rage and madness. The peasant is contented, and gradually loses the spirit of consolidation with the mechanic. The latter, in his turn, avoids and scorns the husbandman, nor seeks to impart to him any new ideas. The son of the mechanic aspires to the position of *bourgeois*. It is his right ; but, to attain it, he must have intelligence or instruction. Unlike the son of the *bourgeois*, he has no chance of becoming a public functionary ; he is denied a liberal career, and must exert a superhuman effort to acquire, in his leisure moments, merely an elementary knowledge, be it only orthography, without which he must remain in a condition of decided inferiority. The mechanic who, after his day's work, goes home to study, is not the first one who has done the same. In the first place, he has a home, — which every one has not, — and a few books ; and, if his daily work is not too laborious, he can take a little time from his sleep.

But suppose that instruction is within the reach of all, that there are everywhere gratuitous courses, and that these courses are well conducted, which is not always the case: the working-man must possess more than the ordinary amount of courage and good sense, to give up his boisterous recreations and absolute freedom after his day's work. The public-house allures him; and the country tavern, which formerly was the rendezvous for conversation and the meeting with one's equals, the outlet for sombre ideas, sometimes even a place for the diffusion of friendship, is now the scene of disorder and vice; and you, whose sons are addicted to all those excesses which they condemn among the poorer classes, have no right to insist on their being closed. This contagion is spreading fast. When I hear any one say, "The working-man ought to be discreet, steady, industrious, and economical," I ask myself, "Why not put the example before the precept?" Is it not arrant folly to require of a certain class of men virtues with which we think *we* can dispense, especially when those virtues are a thousand times more difficult for them, almost impossible without some alleviation in their moral and physical condition?

So the "people" are in the fatal current. It would be wrong for the artisan to compare himself to the "*fellah*." He is free, whatever he may say to the contrary; and his wages have increased with his expenses. But he *may* say that he has fallen into gypsyism, that he is now hardly a citizen. We ought to excuse this; but things will come to that point where they are beyond palliation. He has contracted a taste for vice. His home has become a hell. The necessity for camping around the great centres of labor has affected his habits, moral and physical. In those places where he has come in contact with our corrupt civilization, in cities, especially in Paris, his intelligence is developed on the surface, but has no depth; he understands every thing, but comprehends nothing. Associated, in whatever he does, with the vices and absurdities of the *bourgeoisie*, he parodies them at the same time that he accords them severe censure. Nothing is sadder to sight or hearing than these bombastic discourses, without taste, inspiration, or philosophy. Alas! the working-man is full of affectation; but he is still nothing but a barbarian. He used to be ingenuous, good-tempered, and quick at a repartee, which was sometimes excellent; but

he has obtained his freedom, and now enjoys listening to himself. He makes use of phrases that he does not understand, and murders technical terms. The ridiculous charlatan is not satisfied with being your equal: he desires you to feel that he is your superior, and believes that a wish could make him so.

This is a portrait of what may be called the greater and better portion. What shall we say of those who have no ambition to rise; who, taking the epoch as it is, brutalize themselves with alcohol and debauchery? From this extreme intemperance result the bloodshot eye, the hoarse and cracked voice, the impudent word, and the sinister silence. Ah! poor people! Once you complained of being driven with work, and hardly having Sunday for rest: now — you have paid dearly for it — you have a holiday; that is, from Saturday evening till Monday morning you are intoxicated. On Monday you work poorly; in reality, perform but two or three days' labor during the week. You brutalize yourselves; and that is the benefit of a life of luxury. I cannot but feel the deepest chagrin. I had dreamed of a future, not near, but not very distant, a crisis of social peace, when the two classes (since there are now but two), becom-

ing enlightened as to their reciprocal rights and duties, should join in a firm union, beyond all politics or party spirit. Surely this great object will be achieved ; but the Empire, which ought to have lent it a helping hand, and the Emperor, who declared himself in favor of it, have taken the wrong road. The Paris of Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau has become the city of Sardapalus. Instead of public schools in our villages, we have satrapies in our prefectures. Our country girls seek Paris for their dream of fortune, and wake up upon the pavements between hunger and prostitution. Our rich young women become giddy, our poor young women — sell themselves !

We have not yet reached the end ; for each day marks, in its passage, some new effort towards this decomposition ; this vertigo is seeking a still loftier point for its precipitation. The ignorant masses watch these somnambulists as they pursue their dance upon the roofs. The peasant, who now eats meat, and no longer goes to market on foot, shrugs his shoulders, and says, “ Fine times ! The rich are being ruined ; the working-people are having a dispute, and gaining nothing. *We* are living well without much expense. The great estates are being divided into small lots, and we are buying at retail.”

In fact, the peasant is amassing in proportion as the *bourgeoisie* is distributing. In a century all the land will be in the possession of the former. But his will not form a new class that will take its rank in society: it will be only a stratum resting upon a more ancient stratum. Herein does not lie the solution of the social problem. The class which is working for enjoyment, and not for possessions, will threaten the rich of to-morrow as they threaten the rich of to-day.

All this is mortally dark, dark and sorrowful; and, after such a summary, one feels, as it were, a disgust for the relations of life. Let us see what efforts the mind can make, to reach a more logical solution than that of the Empire. We do not know exactly where it is leading us: let us try and see how we could go alone, if we should cease to be led like children.

Republic or monarchy, it matters little. The best course would be to find a new name for the two antinomies which exist here as everywhere. We should have to await the time when the producer and the vender would in good earnest, and under the pressure of a social necessity well demonstrated, sign an act of association. This act should be rigorously stipulated, after having

been thoroughly debated by representatives chosen with a view to the respective interests of both parties. These debates would touch upon the more or less elevated character of labor, industry, and intelligence, by which the working-man helps to build up the fortune of his patron. The associations of mutual interests, which are formed nowadays, by private agreement in particular cases, would be established legally and uniformly throughout France, by the promulgation of a constitutional law, but on certain conditions of moral worth on both sides, which would serve as a guaranty for the two parties contracting.

It is not within my province to develop this idea, very simple, and already wide-spread, but requiring such delicate application as to demand special knowledge. A basis has been sketched by many short essays. We must suppose that the means for application were not sufficient: it is impossible to believe that they do not exist. Every good and generous idea that the human mind conceives can and ought to be realized. It is foolish to say, "Your idea is very fine, but it is impracticable." If it is fine, it *cannot* be impracticable. Humanity is so constructed that, notwithstanding all its errors and deviations, it

tends towards the light, and towards the straight line. We have been able to establish the distinction of interests, a triumph of civilization over barbarity, a work much more difficult than that of the association of interests in the midst of civilization.

The day will come, therefore I do not despair ; but, just at present, we are turning from the right course, and I am distressed.

CHAPTER III.

AGAIN IN THE WOODS.

FONTAINEBLEAU, August, 1837.

HERE I am again in the woods, with no companion but my son, who is getting to be a great boy ; and yet I am even now more his cavalier than he is mine. We risk our lives on all sorts of animals, — donkeys and horses more or less wild, who generally take us where they choose, from seven o'clock in the morning till five or six o'clock in the evening. We take neither a guide, nor a plan in our pockets. We don't mind where we wander, for it would be difficult to lose one's way in a forest full of guide-posts. We avoid meeting any one, by taking those roads least frequented ; and they are not the less beautiful. Every thing here is lovely. Forests are always beautiful, in every country in the world. Here the hilly nature of the ground increases its charm, without rendering travel impracticable. It is no slight pleasure to be able to climb every-

where, even on horseback, and to gather flowers and butterflies wherever we are tempted. These long rides — whole days in the open air — just suit my taste ; and this solitude, and this solemn silence, at certain Paris hours, are inappreciable. We live on bread, cold chicken, and fruit, which we bring with us, together with books, albums, and insect-boxes. What interesting noctules ! What fresh specimens of the bombyx asleep, and, as it were, glued to the bark of the oak-trees ! What collections for Maurice, and what pleasure to display them in the evening upon the work-table ! We are acquainted with no one in the town. We occupy a small but very comfortable suite of apartments in a hotel just on the confines of the woods, where nobody troubles himself about our affairs. We have two little chambers, separated by a small parlor, where I work at night while my child is snoring. This good, sound sleep is delightful to my ears. As to myself, I do not know when I sleep : I never give it a thought. Mine is a rational life. I live in the trees, upon the heath, on the sand, — I live in Nature's activity and in her repose, in the instinct and in feeling, but, above all, in my son. He has been ill, but is now decidedly better. He enjoys

this kind of life as much as myself, and that gives me double pleasure. What a marvel is this blessed forest! M. de S nancour has drawn an admirable picture of it in certain pages of his work; in others, I know not why, he depreciates it, as though he were afraid of bestowing too much admiration. Some would say that he saw it through spleen. He tries to impress upon his readers that it is not so vast or mountainous as Switzerland. Why draw a comparison? In that way we are doing ourselves a wrong, — we are waging a petty war with our own enjoyment. What is beautiful in a certain way is neither more nor less so than something else that is beautiful in a different way. For my own part, I could pass my life here, without ever thinking of Switzerland, and *vice versa*. When one is well off, I do not understand the necessity of trying to better his position. I do not know whether the proverb, “Le mieux est l’ennemi du bien,” is absolutely true; but in point of locomotion, curiosity, contemplation, or the study of things in general, I am of opinion that regret, or the desire for something better, is the delusion of a morbid fancy. That was the case with S nancour. “Obermann” shows a morbid genius. I used to like it

very much : I like it still, that strange book, so admirably deformed ! but I much prefer a fine, healthy tree.

Thus we have healthy trees and morbid books, luxuriance and despondency. That which is devoid of thought must necessarily remain young and beautiful, to prove that prosperity's laws are absolute, beyond our relative and factitious laws which make us old and ugly before our time. That which is endowed with thought must suffer, to prove that we live in false conditions, in discord with our real needs and true instincts. So all these magnificent things incapable of thinking furnish many a subject for thought.

NOHANT, 1863.

“ So,” persisted A——, who read me the foregoing letter dated twenty-six years ago (I do not know how it fell into his possession), “ you are thinking at the same time that you are indulging in revery, although you may pretend to have the power of banishing thought at certain times ? ”

“ I make no pretensions, my dear A——, but I solemnly assure you that there are moments when I cease to think. If you are astonished at that, I am none the less so to hear you often affirm that

been much censured for having too much philosophy in my romances. That arises from my frequent fits of passiveness. If I am under the influence of deep feeling, or moved by a conviction, my reflections, my reveries, even my fictions, are necessarily affected. They are impregnated in like manner as our clothes and our hair retain the perfume of the garden or the woods. It is not my fault if occasionally my mind soars above my occupation: it is because it has discovered a more beautiful region, and because it is beyond my power to tear myself away suddenly, and devote my energies to the achievement of *success*; that is, to the art of displeasing no one.

Free arbitration, entirely free! Fifty years ago I made an attempt to think of such subjects only as could be made useful by the slave that I am. In order to control my unruly brain, I determined on a regular life, and imposed upon myself a daily task; but twenty times out of thirty I forgot myself, and fell to dreaming or reading or writing on some subject which ought not to have absorbed my attention. Had it not been for these frequent intellectual strolls, I should have acquired instruction; for I comprehend pretty readily, and analyze even too rapidly.

I should have forced my mind to classify its ideas. To understand and to know has been my perpetual aspiration; but my desire has by no means been realized. My will has not had absolute control over my thoughts; yet I cannot suffer from remorse, for I have indulged in no idleness, nor opened the door to any kind of distraction. The exterior world has always had more power over me than I over it. I have become a mirror, in which my own reflection is crowded out by the accumulation of other figures and objects. When I try to see myself in this mirror, I behold plants, insects, landscapes, water, the profiles of mountains, clouds, and, above all, unheard-of heights; but nothing in this world takes note of me unless from want of my admiration, and then laughs at my flattering description.

When we sleep, and dreams rock us gently or shake us roughly, we are the delighted or terrified captives of the spectres that visit us. What are they? Whence do they come? What avails our will to retain them or to drive them away? It is powerless. A fool is a poor wretch who dreams without sleeping. Are we not fools every time we dream?

It is maintained that dreams are caused by ourselves, that they are the result of impressions received, painful or agreeable, according to the condition of the body. Granted; but this result is produced in spite of ourselves. And these impressions received, — what would they be, were it not for the action of the external world, which exercises over us an invincible power, doubled in intensity when our will is disarmed by sleep? This power becomes even ferocious towards our poor *me* in the visions of certain fevers. It is certain, then, that poets or philosophers, kings or shepherds, active or indolent, weak or strong, we are, during a third or a quarter part of our lives, — the time given to sleep, — under the control of a vision, to whose mild or terrible omnipotence we must submit. Who would venture to affirm that, while in a state of sleep, we are all in a lucid condition, and capable of repulsing these obsessions of the *not-me*? If it were so, if we had the control of our thoughts, we should also have the control of our feelings. Grief at losing our dear ones would be soon effaced by the power of our will. Oblivion would enter our minds, and we should become perfect egotists. I forgot that I am writing this evening for A——, and that he

will cry out against this want of devotion. Well, he over-estimates his own powers when he imagines that he can make his ideas subject to his inclination. Such a thing is not possible. We differ more or less; fundamentally, however, we are all the same to a certain degree, and I do not believe that any one of us possesses the power of voluntarily withdrawing from the external world. Wisdom consists, perhaps, in making an orderly classification of the nature of impressions received, not allowing one to encroach upon another, and separating, as occasion may require, the one that is to be received. Thence the great works of the mind, and even ingenuities of trade; thence also the great concentrations of study, specialities. But to believe that all men are endowed with this power, — no, I cannot; and I even consider it very fortunate that we are not masters of ourselves to that degree maintained by some. Our freedom is in proportion to our knowledge; that is, our intellectual development. Free arbitration signifies free choice between good and evil; but to make that choice is required a clear knowledge of what is good and what is evil. Individuals deprived, by a bad education, of healthy moral ideas, have little knowledge of conscience; others

possess a vague notion of it, and allow that to become easily perverted by corrupt influences. Our judgment, then, must be developed by education, to escape that fatality which threatens the life of the ignorant; but this education, too stoical or too idealistic, ought not to awaken a desire to absolutely destroy all communication with outward influences. This would be a mad attempt, which would lead to folly, fanaticism, or atheism; to the hatred of God or our equals; to inordinate pride, which is nothing more nor less than a deprivation of our relations with universal life, consequently a narrowness of conception. All that is apparently apart from us belongs to ourselves. The *not-me* has not an absolute existence: consequently the absolute *me* is a false notion. The whole earth and the whole heavens are constantly exerting an action over us; and we are unconsciously imparting a similar re-action. Every thing is either a receptacle or an outlet, an element or a sustenance, of life. The respiration of all beings is necessary to provide each one of us with his dose of vital air. The clouds are the sweat of the earth: they must perspire, or we should become parched. The smallest star in the Milky Way has an assigned function to

perform for the subsistence of the universe. Like the drop of water brilliant with the hues of the prism, *we* have reflections, immense projections into space. And I, poor atom that I am, when I feel myself the rainbow or the Milky Way, am indulging in no vain dream. I am in all, and all in me.

I am not at liberty to sever myself from what constitutes my life. Death will not effect the separation. I cannot become annihilated by my will. It would be useless for me to say, "I wish to end my being. I do not desire to feel, laugh, or weep. I will neither suffer nor enjoy. I will behold crime, shame, insanity, and say, 'Those people are fools, but it matters not to me.' I will lose those whom I love, and say to myself that these things must happen, and that my grief cannot restore them to life. I will be wise, holy, or strong, in my own self, in my corner, in my shell, in my inward satisfaction. I will have, as a recompense, great wisdom or great power, fortune or paradise. I have broken with the affections, with weaknesses, with all curiosity, with all joint responsibility, with all nature. I scorn all beings, having made myself a man pre-eminently free, the most isolated, the least influenced, the least subservient, the strongest, of all beings."

Is not this what every man says to himself when he proclaims himself *king of the creation*? It is the greatest nonsense imaginable. We are neither kings nor slaves, but members of one great association called the world, — nothing more, nothing less.

If we have been able to subdue a few animals by mutilating them, if we do arrogate to ourselves, above all others, the right to life and death, we are not the less at war with the greater part of them, and innumerable multitudes escape our dominion. A microscopic insect is capable of causing us annoyance, even as a fly is sufficient to rouse the fury of a lion. Alas! animals and people are equal in the laws of Nature, if our pride would only acknowledge it. Immutable though she is, she allows us to infringe upon her laws, but not to destroy them, either in the outward world or within ourselves.

All Frenchmen are equal in the eyes of the law. Such is the device of our society. A cruel sentence when it visits the same penalty on him who is ignorant as on him who is cognizant. Lords of creation, we have not been able to improve upon the brute laws of unconscious nature. It was not worth while to usurp so fine a title.

This great king, Mr. Man, has tried for all empires, and believed that he possessed the empire of self when he invented stoicism. As all his inventions are inadequate on one side, extreme on the other, with reason in the centre, so this philosophy has its folly, its sublimity, its madness. It rests upon that perfect faith in free arbitration, which is the subject of my meditation. It lays down as a principle that man can do what he likes, and that question is badly put. Men—humanity—can, in the long-run, do what they like. The individual man, in his short life, can do almost nothing: his power of a day vanishes with him, often before him. To wish for too much involves danger, as to wish for too little imposes a limit. Stoicism is beautiful whilst it develops the courage to bear inevitable sufferings: it becomes horrible when it destroys sensibility, compassion, tenderness. Certain ascetic devotions fall unconsciously into the excess of stoicism, and yet have not the merit of sacrificing every thing to virtue, since they are working for a personal interest,—paradise. I have known those who reckoned with God Almighty as Jews with their client, keeping an account of their sacrifices and deprivations,

and saying, "That will be put to my credit in heaven."

Where is charity, true devotion, or real sacrifice, in this *debit and credit* of the devout conscience? The stoic said, "I wish to overcome suffering in order to teach other men to overcome weakness and cowardice." The ascetic troubles himself very little about his fellow-creatures. They are only in the way of his salvation, and he tries to avoid them. He looks upon life merely as an opportunity of gaining a happy eternity.

Is, then, this halting-place on our way to eternity of no account? Are not the sorrows with which it abounds duties which we must accept, trials to which we must submit, homage we must pay to our mission in this world? To destroy grief, to crush regret beneath our feet, to overturn the laws of Nature, to shake off human reason, would certainly be very convenient; but, if such be possible to certain perverted minds, I cannot see that it is edifying, useful, or productive.

In all the philosophies which have guided man, this principle appears to be always dominant, — to abstain. The Epicureans themselves did not

preach, as might be supposed, sensualism and the surrender of the mind to all its fancies. They, too, had their restrictions, their principles of moderation, even of abstinence.

The aim of all wisdom is to teach us how to suffer least; consequently, to avoid what causes suffering. Christianity, which is not a matter of wisdom, but an ideal, has taught us the contrary: "Seek suffering for your purification." This is grand and beautiful, since the hope of personal recompense in another life is not of such a character as to cancel all merit in the martyr. Now that we understand the abuse which fanaticism has made of the ideal, we need a philosophy which shall teach us not to seek, but to accept suffering as a universal law whence springs universal renovation.

Nature, which seeks to make us sensitive to pain, appears wiser to me in her salutary rigor, than our so-called wisdom in its claims to suppress pain by force of will. Nature does not allow us to become insensible; and it is almost impiety to refuse to feel her blows. By seeking too much freedom, we abandon nature and truth, and enter upon an abnormal existence; because absolute freedom can be acquired only by abandoning humanity.

Therefore I do not reproach myself so much for not absolutely controlling my mind. I feel that its merry frolics and its listlessness arise from the nature of the impressions which it receives, and which it has not always the right to avoid. This has nothing to do with the question of good and evil. If, in perverse minds, the corrupt imagination furnishes poisonous food, it is in vain to preach free arbitration. The perverse mind will choose the freedom of evil. In holy minds, the imagination is a delicate friend, which must not be treated inconsiderately, and which, sadly or joyously, tells us of divine things, thus making amends to us for the time that it spends in actual study.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE. — REPLY TO A FRIEND.

NOHANT, August, 1871.

WHAT! you wish me to cease loving? You wish me to say that I have been mistaken all my life, that humanity is hateful, despicable, that it has always been so, and always will be? And do you chide me for my grief as if it were a weakness, childish regret for a lost illusion? Do you affirm that the "people" have always been ferocious, the priest hypocritical, the *bourgeois* cowardly, the soldier thievish, the peasant stupid? You say that you have known this from your youth, and rejoice that you have never doubted it, because now mature age has no deception to disclose. You have never been young, then. Ah, it is very different with me! If to love continually makes one young, then I am still young. How do you wish me to isolate myself from my fellow-creatures, my compatriots, from that great family in the midst of which my private family is but an ear of corn in the great terrestrial field?

If this ear could ripen in some safe place, if we could, as you say, live for a few privileged beings, and withdraw ourselves from all others— But that would be impossible. Your sound sense is indulging in the most unreal of Utopias. In what Eden, in what fantastic Eldorado, would you conceal your family, your little group of friends, your own private happiness, where they would be unmolested by the commotions of social life or political disasters? *You* might be happy in the society of a chosen few; but those few, the favorites of your heart, must be happy by themselves. Can they be so? Can you insure them the least security? Could you find a refuge for me in my old age, when on the verge of death? What difference does it make to me, on my own account, whether I die now, or live a little longer? I will suppose that we die completely, or that love does not follow us to another life: should we not be tormented, till our dying breath, with the desire, the imperious necessity, of insuring for those whom we leave the greatest possible amount of happiness? Could we go to sleep in peace when we felt the earth trembling, ready to swallow up those for whom we have lived?

Domestic happiness is, in spite of every thing, a

great relative good, the only consolation that we could or would enjoy. But even supposing that external evil could not reach our homes, — which, you know very well, would be impossible, — I will not allow that we could be resigned to what causes the public unhappiness.

This was all foreseen. I foresaw it as well as any one else. I beheld the storm rising: I looked on, like all others who gave their earnest attention, at the evident approach of the cataclysm. Is it any consolation to us, when we see the patient writhing in suffering, that we understand the nature of his disease? When the thunderbolt strikes us, are we calm from having heard its previous rumbling? No, no: we cannot isolate ourselves; we cannot break the bonds of consanguinity; we cannot curse nor despise our race. Humanity is not a vain word. Our life is composed of love; and not to love, is not to live.

The people, you say, the people! That is you and I, beyond denial. There are not two races. The distinction of class only proves the illusiveness of relative inequalities. I do not know whether you have remote ancestors in the *bourgeoisie*: as to myself, my maternal roots come directly from the people, and I feel them still

alive at the extremity of my being. We all have them there, although in some instances they are more distinct than in others. The first men were hunters and shepherds, then laborers and soldiers. Plunder crowned with success gave birth to the first social distinctions. There is not, perhaps, a title that was not obtained through the blood of man. We must submit to ancestors, if we have them; but are these first trophies of hatred and violence a glory of which any mind, however little philosophic, would think of availing itself? The *people always ferocious*, you say: *I* say, the nobility always savage.

It is certain that the peasants, as a class, are the most unyielding to progress, consequently the least civilized. Thinkers ought to rejoice that they do not belong to this class; but if we are *bourgeois*, if we are descendants of the serf and the feudal tenant, can we bow with love and respect before the sons of our fathers' oppressors? No! Whoever disowns the people degrades himself, and presents to the world the shameful spectacle of apostasy. If we, as *bourgeoisie*, wish to rise again, and once more become a class, we have nothing to do but proclaim ourselves the "people," and struggle, till death, with those who

pretend to superiority by divine right. For having failed in dignity in our revolutionary mandate, for having aped the nobility, usurped its insignia, and caught up its playthings, for having been shamefully ridiculous and cowardly, we are no longer reckoned of any value. The common people, who ought to have made one with us, now disown, forsake, and oppress us.

The people ferocious? No: they are no longer fools. Their real disease is ignorance and simplicity. It was not the common people of Paris that massacred the prisoners, destroyed the monuments, and tried to set fire to the city. The common people were the only ones who remained in Paris after the siege; for all who could by any means afford it hastened to breathe the provincial air, and embrace their absent relatives, after the physical and moral sufferings arising from the investment of the city. All who remained in Paris were the merchant and the workman, those two agents of labor and exchange, without which Paris could not exist. These are what, in reality, constitute the common people of Paris; it is one and the same family, whose union and relationship cannot be destroyed by political misunderstandings. It is acknowledged now that the oppressors

of this time were among the minority. The common people of Paris were not disposed to be furious; for the majority showed signs of weakness and fear. The movement was organized by men who had already entered the ranks of the *bourgeoisie*, and no longer had any thing in common with the habits or necessities of the *prolétariat*. The former were moved by hatred, deceived ambition, misapprehended patriotism, fanaticism without an ideal, and the folly of sentiment or natural wickedness. To all these combined were added certain points of honor in regard to doctrine, which would not shrink from danger. They certainly did not lean upon the middle class, who trembled, fled, or sought concealment. They were forced to incite to action the true *prolétaire*, who have nothing to lose. Well, this *prolétaire*, even, eluded them in a great measure, divided as was this class into such diverse shades, some trying to profit from the disorder, others dreading the consequences of their enthusiasm, the greater part using no reason at all, because the evil had become extreme, and want of work had forced them to march to the contest at thirty sous a day.

Why do you make this *prolétariat*, shut up in Paris, and numbering not more than eighty thou-

sand soldiers, — victims of hunger and despair, — represent the people of France? They do not even represent the people of Paris, unless you maintain the distinction that I reject, between the producer and the trader.

But I will follow you, and ask upon what ground you base this distinction. Is it upon a greater or less amount of education? The limit would be undiscernible. If you find among the highest of the *bourgeoisie* wise and literary men, if you see among the lowest of the *prolétariat* savages and brutes, you have still that intermediate multitude, presenting here wise and intelligent *prolétaires*, there *bourgeois* neither wise nor intelligent. The greater part of enlightened citizens date from the present time; and many of those who can read and write have fathers and mothers who can hardly sign their names.

Should the classification of men into two distinct camps depend solely upon the accumulation of wealth? Even then, where could you place the boundary-line, when, every day, some change is taking place? Ruin thrusts one down, fortune raises another. They exchange positions. He who was *bourgeois* this morning becomes *prolétaire* this evening; and he who was *prolétaire* just now

will change to *bourgeois* during the day, if he find a purse, or receive a legacy from an uncle.

⁶² You see now that such an attempt would be vain, and that the labor of classification, whatever method was pursued, would be insurmountable.

One man is neither above nor below another, except in point of common-sense or morality. Instruction which develops only egotistic sensuality is worth less than the ignorance of the *prolétaire*, honest from instinct and habit. This compulsory instruction, which we all desire out of respect for human rights, is not a panacea, from which we may look for miracles. It serves bad natures as a more ingenious and clandestine means of doing evil. Like every thing that man uses and abuses, it may become both the poison and the antidote. The idea of an infallible remedy for our trials is an illusion. We should avail ourselves of all possible means, and think of nothing in practical life but the amelioration of manners, and reconciliation of interests. France is in her death-agony; that is certain: we are all sick, corrupt, ignorant, discouraged. To say that this must be, that it always has been and always will be, is to repeat the fable of the

schoolmaster and the drowning child ; as much as to say, " It makes no difference to me." But if you add, " It does not concern me," you are mistaken. The deluge comes, and death seizes us : it would be in vain to use prudence, and withdraw. Your place of shelter will be destroyed in its turn ; while perishing with the rest of human civilization, you will not be more philosophical for not having loved, than those who have leaped into the water to save some wreck of humanity. These wrecks are not worth the trouble. Perhaps so. They will perish none the less, and we shall perish with them : that is certain ; but we shall die in the full vigor of life. I should prefer this to a winter amidst the ice, or a death in anticipation ; besides, *I* could not do otherwise. Love does not use reason. If I should ask you why you have a fondness for study, you could not give me a better explanation than could an indolent person why he was fond of idleness.

Do you think my mind disordered, that you preach isolation ? You say that you have read pieces about me in the newspapers, indicating a sudden change in my ideas, and that these newspapers, which seem friendly towards me, try to believe that this has been brought about by some

new gleam of light; while others, which do not mention my name, suppose, perhaps, that I have deserted the cause of the future. Let politicians think and say what they like. Leave them to their critical appreciations. I have no objection to make, no answer to offer. The public has other than my personal interests to discuss. I hold a pen, and I have an honorable position, free to discussion, in one of our leading papers. If I have been misinterpreted, it rests with me to make an explanation when the opportunity offers. I avoid, as far as possible, all mention of myself as a private individual; but, if *you* think me converted to false notions, I must say to you, as to all others who take an interest in me: Read all that I have to say, and do not judge from detached fragments. The mind independent of party exigencies sees necessarily the *pro* and the *con*; and the sincere writer gives both without regard to the blame or praise of his interested readers. Every sensible being clings to synthesis, and I believe I have not let go my hold. Reason and feeling combined prompt me to reject every thing that would lead us back to childhood, in politics, in religion, in philosophy, or in art. My feelings and my reason oppose, more than ever, the idea of fictitious dis-

tinctions, the inequality of conditions imposed as a right acquired by some, as a forfeiture deserved by others. More than ever, I feel the need of raising what is low, and lifting what has fallen.

While my heart exists it will be open to pity, and will take the part of the weak and calumniated. If to-day it is the down-trodden people, I will offer them my hand. If it is the oppressor and executioner, I will tell him that he is cowardly and hateful. What do I care for this or that group of men, those proper names which have become ensigns, or those personal remarks which stand for watchwords? I make a distinction only between the wise and the foolish, the innocent and the guilty. I do not inquire where are my friends, and where my enemies. They remain wherever the storm has thrown them. Those who have deserved my affection, yet cannot see with my eyes, I hold none the less dear. The inconsiderate blame of those who forsake me does not make me consider them my enemies. All friendship unjustly withdrawn remains intact within the heart that has not deserved such an outrage. That heart is above self-love : it can wait for the revival of justice and affection.

Such is the upright and easy course of a

conscience which does not allow personal interests to conflict with party interests. Those who cannot say as much of themselves will certainly meet with success, if they have the talent to avoid giving displeasure; and, the greater degree to which they possess this talent, the greater will be the opportunity for satisfying their passions. But do not call them into history as witnesses for absolute truth. The moment that they make their opinion a matter of business, that moment their opinion is worthless.

I know mild, generous, and timorous natures, that, in the terrible epoch of our history, have reproached themselves for having loved and served the cause of the weak. They see but a single point in space. They believe that the "people," whom they loved and served, exist no longer, because, in their place, a horde of bandits, followed by a little army of misguided men, have taken momentary possession of the scene of contest. It requires an effort for these good souls to believe that all that was righteous and interesting in the poor and disinherited exists there still; only it is not apparent because political commotion has driven it from the scene. When such dramas are performed, those who

gladly and voluntarily join in them are the vain and covetous ones of the family; those who allow themselves to be dragged in are the idiots. That there are millions of covetous, idiotic, and vain people in France, no one doubts; but there are just as many, and perhaps more, in other countries. Let an opportunity occur similar to those which too frequently arouse our evil passions, and you will see if other nations are better than we. Interfere with the Germanic race, whose disciplinary aptitude we so much admire, but whose armies have just exhibited brutal appetites mingled with their barbarous simplicity, and you will see their exasperation. The insurgents of Paris would appear sober and virtuous in comparison.

But this is not an atom of consolation. The German nation will be as much an object of pity for her victories as we for our defeats; for they are the first step towards her moral dissolution. The drama of her overthrow has commenced; and, as she is working at it with her own hands, it will make rapid progress. All great material organizations, where right, justice, and respect for humanity are disregarded, are colossals of clay. We have obtained this knowledge at our cost.

Well, the moral degradation of Germany is not the future salvation of France; and, should we feel called upon to retaliate the evil which it has done to us, its destruction would not restore us to life. It is not by blood that nations renew their strength and become rejuvenated. The breath of life may yet arise from the corpse of France: that of Germany will be a centre of pestilence for all Europe. A nation that has lost its ideal cannot survive its faculties. Its death is unproductive; and those who breathe its fetid emanations contract the same mortal disease. Poor Germany! The cup of the Almighty's anger is poured upon thee as well as upon us; and, while thou art rejoicing and growing intoxicated, the philosophic mind is weeping over thy situation, and preparing thy epitaph. This wounded being, pale and bleeding, which is called France, still holds in its shrivelled hands a skirt of the starry coat of the future, whilst thou enfoldest thyself in a sullied flag which will serve for thy winding-sheet. Past greatness holds no place in the history of men. It is all over with kings who impose upon the people; it is all over with the people imposed upon, if they consent to their own degradation.

That is why we are so ill, and why my heart is broken.

It is not with a feeling of contempt that I behold our misery. I am unwilling to believe that this holy country, this cherished nation, whose every chord, harmonious or discordant, I feel vibrate within myself; for whose good qualities, and defects even, I have an affection; whose responsibilities, good or bad, I consent to accept, rather than extricate myself through disdain, — I am unwilling to believe that my country and my nation are death-struck. I feel it in my suffering, in my hours of deep dejection; but I love, so I live. Let us love and live.

Frenchmen, let us love one another! Yes, let us love one another, or we are lost. Let us abjure, annihilate politics, since they have caused division, and armed one against another. Let us ask no one what he was, or what he wished yesterday. *Then* every one was mistaken; let us find out what we wish *to-day*. If it is not to be liberty and fraternity for all, let us not seek to solve the problem of equality. We are not worthy of explaining it, nor capable of understanding it. Equality is not obtrusive. It is a free plant, which grows only in fertile soil and

salubrious air. It does not take root upon barricades, — we know that now, — for it is immediately trampled down by the conqueror, whoever he may be. Let us seek to ingraft it into our manners, and consecrate it in our minds. Let us give it, for a starting-point, patriotic charity, love. It is folly to believe that men go forth from battle with respect for human rights. Every civil war has engendered and will engender crime. Unhappy Internationality! is it true that thou hast faith in the illusion that force surpasses right? If thou art as numerous and powerful as is supposed, is it possible that thou professest hatred and destruction to be a part of thy duty? No: thy power is a phantom of fear. An assemblage of men from all nations could not deliberate and act from principles of iniquity. If thou art the ferocious part of the European nation, something like the Anabaptists of Münster, like them, thou wilt be thy own destruction. If, on the contrary, thou art a great and legitimate fraternal association, thy duty is to enlighten adepts, and to renounce those who degrade and compromise thy cause. I would still believe that there are in thy midst a large number of humane and hard-working men, who are distressed and blush to see

bandits using thy name. In this case, thy silence is cowardly and out of place. Hast thou not a single member capable of protesting against ignoble attempts, idiotic principles, and furious madness? Thy elect, thy administrators, thy leaders, — are they all brigands or madmen? No! that cannot be. There is no assemblage of men whatever where the voice of truth cannot make itself heard. Speak then, justify thyself, proclaim thy gospel. If discord is in thy midst, dissolve and be reconstructed. Appeal to the future, if thou art not an ancient invasion of barbarians. Tell those who still love the people what they ought to do; and if thou hast nothing to say, if the iniquity of thy mysteries is sealed by fear, renounce noble sympathy, feed on the scorn of honest souls, and struggle between the jailer and the *gendarme*.

All France has been waiting for the word which should decide thy destiny, and perhaps her own. She has waited in vain. I, too, have innocently been waiting. While condemning the means, I do not wish to forejudge the end. Every revolution has some aim; and those which fail have not always the weakest foundations. Political fanaticism seems to have been the first feeling in this

struggle. These lost children of the democratic army refused an inevitable peace, perhaps, because they felt it to be disgraceful. Paris had sworn to be buried beneath its ruins. The democratic people meant to force the *bourgeois* people to keep their word. They seized the cannons, and turned them against the Prussians. It was a mad proceeding. The first act of the *Commune* was to preserve peace; and, in the whole course of its administration, it has not offered the enemy an insult nor a threat; but it committed the notorious, dastardly act of overthrowing, under its very eyes, the column perpetuating the enemy's defeats and our victories. It objects to the power arising from universal suffrage, and, yet availed itself of that suffrage, at Paris, for its own constitution. It is true that this was needed. It has discarded the appearance of legality which it tried to assume, and acts by brute force, without seeking any other claim than that of hatred and contempt, for every thing that is not a part of itself. It proclaims practical social science, declaring itself sole depositary, but does not make mention of it in its decisions and decrees. It declares that it has come to deliver man from his fetters and prejudices; and then immediately

exercises absolute power, and threatens with death whomsoever is not convinced of its infallibility. At the same time that it pretends to return to the tradition of the Jacobins, it usurps social papacy, and arrogates the dictatorship. What kind of a republic is that? I see nothing vital or rational, nothing constitutional, nor any thing that could be made constitutional. It is an orgy of pretended renovators, who have not an idea nor a principle, not the slightest serious organization, not the slightest coalition with the nation, not the least confidence in the future. Ignorance, impudence, and brutality,—that is all that has sprung from this pretended social revolution. Unrestraint of the lowest impulses, the impotence of shameless ambitions, the scandal of audacious usurpations,—that is the scene which we have just witnessed. So this *Commune* has inspired mortal disgust in the most zealous political men, those most devoted to democracy. After useless attempts, they have learned that there can be no reconciliation where there are no principles. So they have withdrawn in grief and consternation; and, the next day, the *Commune* has pronounced them traitors, and given orders for their arrest. It would have shot them, if they had remained within its reach.

And you wish me, my friend, to look upon these things with stoical indifference! Do you wish me to say, "Man is so constituted; crime is the expression of his feelings; infamy, his nature"?

No, decidedly no. Humanity is indignant within me and at me. This indignation is one of the most passionate forms of love: we must not conceal it, nor try to forget it. We must exert immense efforts towards fraternity, in order to repair the ravages of hatred. We must exorcise the scourge, crush infamy beneath contempt, and, through faith, inaugurate the resurrection of our country.

CHAPTER V.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PUNCTUATION. — TO
CHARLES EDMOND.

NOHANT, August, 1871.

YOU ask me, my friend, why I insist on not having my punctuation corrected at the printing-office. I will try to give you my reasons.

Punctuation, as well as style, has its own philosophy. I do not say, as well as *language*. Style is language clearly understood: punctuation is style clearly understood.

There are absolute rules for language, as also for punctuation. Style ought to yield to the exigencies of language, and punctuation to the exigencies of style. I deny that it is immediately dependent on grammatical rules. I maintain that it ought to be more elastic, and be subjected to no absolute rule.

There is an abundance of good treatises on punctuation, which ought to be read, and used as occasion demands, but not submitted to with servility.

It has been said, "The style is the man." Punctuation is even more the man than style. It is the intonation of speech translated by signs of the highest importance. A fine page poorly punctuated is incomprehensible to the sight: a good discourse is incomprehensible to the ear if delivered without punctuation, and disagreeable if the punctuation be bad. The instinct of the intelligent orator is a sure guide. Without being obliged to have recourse to any written rule, he understands how to divide his sentence, suspending the sense, yet, at the same time, making it evident that it is not complete; knows where to pause in a period of unusual length, and how to prolong that pause beyond the laws of moderation by accenting in such a manner as to secure the attention that the sentence demands. A discourse well delivered, a theatrical part well rendered, ought to furnish the most reliable rules for written punctuation.

The actor often errs for want of this knowledge. He needs a great amount of skill, especially in classic verse, to vary his intonation, that neither the ear nor the mind may be fatigued by its monotony; and, at the same time, to preserve the sense, literary or philosophical. A few are so overpowered by this difficulty that they give

utterance to exclamations which destroy the measure of the verse. Even at the "Théâtre Français" one often hears false verse.

Rachel, at the commencement of her career, neither spoke correctly nor punctuated well. She overcame this fault, and reached the apogee of her talent; then, by dint of study, she passed the goal, and, in trying for too great effect, over-punctuated her intonations.

If you wish to account for excess of punctuation, examine the character of a man in reference to his manner of speech. If he weighs every word, if he gives an equal value to all his phrases, if he measures accurately each member, you will immediately be impressed with the idea, that this man thinks too much of himself, that he attributes an exaggerated importance to his own assertions, that he is positive, vain, and despotic. A man so in love with his own sayings will suffer no contradiction, nor permit any opposition. If he writes, his punctuation will produce the same impression as his delivery. He will make an abuse of periods and commas, and will overload his style with incidental phrases, consequently abound in parentheses and dashes.

He who abuses exclamation-points is a power-

less speaker: that is obvious. He who suppresses them entirely, and always turns his periods in such a manner as to avoid their use, is affected, though in a different manner. He is afraid either of yielding to his feelings, or being *suspected* of emotion. In conversation, his criticism is harsh, his reasoning cold, and his joke rough.

The error into which Rachel fell towards the close of her glorious career is the general failing of the actors at the "Théâtre Français," and perhaps the inevitable result of the studies at the *Conservatoire*. These studies are excellent and necessary; but one should be able to pass beyond them, when he has reached a certain height of talent. Delivery, and what I shall call spoken punctuation, are so intimately connected with the mimicry of actors, and of the general orator, that it is impossible to use the slightest exaggeration without affecting the entire aspect of the individual. The least comma produces a vibration of the body, or a change in the physiognomy. The exclamation-point and the interrogation-point have their corresponding expression in the face or the gesture. The too frequent use of these fatigues the hearer, and gives rise to a strange monotony resulting from excess of vari-

ety. This science of particularization, which, at the "Théâtre Français," has reached perfection, must be extremely satisfactory to the illiterate and to the foreigner, both needing this slight aid to enable them to understand a language with every particular of which they are not familiar; but, to the man of true appreciation and quick intellect, this setting forth of the members of a period is annoying, sometimes painful. One needs to breathe from well-filled lungs, when entering the precincts of the beautiful. Great eloquence is easy and abundant; great lyricism needs no pause: it is not out of breath. The latter flows like a river: the former rushes like a torrent. If an incidental phrase slips into lyricism, it must enhance its beauty. It is like the wave that dashes against the rock, becoming broken for an instant, but receiving renewed energy for its departure. In such a case, the suspended burst is an excellent thing; but if, even with much ability, you insist on allowing an equal value to every thing that can form, as it were, an angle of incidence, you destroy the primary effect for the benefit of secondary effects which it would have been much better to sacrifice. You obtain the glitter which destroys the harmony of form and the logic of thought.

To return to written punctuation: in certain places the text should not be overloaded, and in others there should be a bountiful supply. A correct distribution of stops requires tact; and that is why I prefer no absolute rules. In a dialogue between persons of different character, for example, I should vary the punctuation with the expressions. In a rapid narration I should make few pauses; even in a simple statement I should not cut up into phrases what is merely a collection of phrases tending to the same idea. If there is the least research or obscurity in an explanation, it can be made more lucid by a very grammatical punctuation. If, on the contrary, you speak of things which every one can understand by a hint, do not give them an importance which they do not deserve. Hasten to the point in question, whether by written or spoken word.

These shades of difference are not within the province of the proof-reader. A good proof-reader is a perfect grammarian, and he often knows his business much better than we know ours; but when we do know it, and have our own reasons, the proof-reader proves only an obstacle. He cannot be governed by feeling; he

would have too much to do if he entered into the feelings of each one of us ; but, when he has to correct our proofs after us, he should let every one take the responsibility of his own punctuation, as he does that of style. He would make a mistake if, wishing to conform to our idea, he should punctuate a certain page in accordance with what seemed to him our views in another page. Instinctively or from reason, the same writer may take different courses with forms that are analogous, but differ in their fundamental points. Although you may have been very grammatical in some matter-of-fact piece, you do not feel obliged to be so where the subject demands pathos. If your style is clear, it can do without this second explanation of rigid punctuation.

Punctuation ought to be used more to facilitate the first reading, than to give satisfaction as to rules at a second reading. There are a few innovations that might be introduced into our method. For example : it is sometimes difficult to know, at the commencement of a sentence, whether it be interrogative or affirmative : either the eye must run ahead, or the reader must repeat. It would be more convenient to follow the Spanish method,

and place the interrogation-point at the head instead of the tail of the sentence.¹

In verse, punctuation is meaningless while we continue to begin every line with a capital. Wherefore this routine that dazzles both the eye and the mind?

It is so difficult to fix upon any arbitrary laws for punctuation, that every one has his own method; and even proof-readers do not agree among themselves with regard to certain signs. Punctuation is an improvement in language, of rather recent origin. Our ancient masters punctuated their manuscripts very little or not at all: so the editors who have corrected the ancient editions of the classics have acted according to their own taste. Therefore, in order to establish a more or less free and individual style of punctuation, we can refer only to modern authors; and several among these, attaching no importance perhaps to this detail, do not care to be regarded as authority. This is to be regretted; for we might derive from them some valuable information, of which, for my own part, I should be glad to avail myself.

¹ The grammar of grammars agrees with me in regard to this innovation.

I do not know whether M. Michelet carefully corrects his own proofs, or whether the proof-readers pass over his stops and marks ; but he is strangely lavish of punctuation. His style is very abrupt, the result of power and enthusiasm. So much the more reason for not making it needlessly abrupt. Any one reading his works aloud according to their punctuation would have the appearance of being asthmatic.

The punctuation of Louis Blanc is very correct, but too uniformly correct, and always abiding by the same law of composition.

M. Thiers is freer in his manner, and, probably without being aware of it, is solving a great problem,—that of abundant punctuation without allowing its copiousness to become apparent. Théophile Gautier uses more commas than are necessary for a style perfect in its construction. He follows the example of Victor Hugo, whose exceeding clearness ought not to suffer the imputation of so many signs.

I do not know whether Alexandre Dumas, sen., punctuated his own manuscripts and corrected his own proof-sheets. At any rate, they needed to be punctuated again. His epistles contained neither commas nor periods : his t's were not crossed, his

i's not dotted, and he scorned the use of the apostrophe. His writing was like hieroglyphics, although he was one of the finest penmen in the world. On the contrary, the simplest letters of M. de Lamennais might have passed, at the printing-office, for corrected proofs.

Sometimes I receive letters miserable in orthography, but well worded, and punctuated as if punctuation were a peculiar instinct. Some I receive, otherwise irreproachable, but punctuated so fantastically as to be rendered very obscure. To simplify punctuation as much as possible would make it easier to remember: so I think it should be simplified. In many cases this could be easily done. The comma preceding *and* is, as a general thing, useless. *She dressed herself, and then went out.* Why not, *She dressed herself and then went out?* I do not need to be told that to dress and to go out are two separate actions: I need, rather, to feel that they are two actions united in a common end. Many commas placed before *which* are superfluous. *He approached the lamp, which was going out. I confided the message to this man, who appeared to be honest. This friend, who deceives and flatters me, is your friend too.* These commas, which abound in editions

both well and badly corrected, are useless and tiresome.

Perhaps you think I attach too much importance to a detail about which few persons trouble themselves. Am I wrong in feeling that we ought early to acquire the habit of having a reason for all that we do and all that we write? There are contingencies enough in life, which are unavoidable, without our yielding to them voluntarily. There will be times when, from fatigue, or press of business, we shall fail in our resolutions or habits. There is no danger, if we are earnest in our feelings, of our existence becoming cold and methodical; but, rather, of our being drawn into the opposite extreme. Then our only course would be to exert a little control over our feelings, and, as soon as possible, seize from the shipwreck of our joys the waif of reason.

Since we have devoted this conversation to pedagogism, permit me to ask — you who are better acquainted with French than most of us — if you consider our language clearer than all others. For my own part, I am not of that opinion. It clings too closely to the Latin, a dead language, and one not suited to our forms and manners. The construction of ours is too simple.

I prefer the English with its odious sounds, and distortions of the mouth, its hissings and drawling gutturals. It is a language well fitted for malformed mouths and defective throats, characteristics of the race; but it is a language clear, energetic, regular, to the point, and as well adapted as ours to express different shades of meaning.

By a few innovations we might give to written French a little more logic and clearness. I know that this is forbidden ground; but I have never written a grammar, so have the privilege of criticism. I have no right to simplify the language; but I believe that it will simplify itself by the inevitable admission of the classes called illiterate into the direct advance of the *bourgeoise* class, which is not very well versed in French on leaving college. What constitutes the beauty and solidity of the language will struggle successfully against an invasion of barbarians; but the superfluities, the work of pedantry, will, I hope, disappear. Already our young peasants are beginning to speak more simply.

CHAPTER VI.

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE. — REPLY TO A LADY FRIEND.

NOHANT, October, 1871. . .

I KNOW that cultivated persons, men of letters and artists are, like you, dreading the social consequences of universal suffrage, which forms the engrossing topic of the day. In answer to your reproach, I will make a summary of the objections which appear to me on this subject, calling upon the public for judgment, because such questions interest every one, and ought not to be confined to the domain of privacy.

All objections to universal suffrage such as is practised to-day bear upon the present time; and no one takes the future into consideration. Still more, no one seems to realize the fact that the modification of this suffrage would certainly require a revolution, and that the establishment of it at the time when its establishment would become necessary would involve another revolution. It appears to me that this is not what you

desire. Nevertheless two possibilities of such grave import ought to demand some little attention. An attempt to revise the law of universal suffrage has given us the *plébiscité* after the *coup d'état*. Do you think that another attempt would produce such a state of affairs that no claimants would arise to turn the thing to their own profit?

The right of suffrage being a weapon for the usurpation of power, I do not see how any one could think seriously of allowing it, if the desire is, as with you, to maintain the republic.

The thoughtlessness with which those in your circle (I mean in the social class to which you belong) talk of incitement to this great modification of suffrage proves that they regard *the multitude* as a vast flock of sheep, without voluntary action or consciousness of their rights. This is a great error, the error of those who live in a garden of flowers, without ever having considered what is below the thin layer of soil that nourishes their plants.

My comparison is true. Persons of refined leisure or intellectual labor live, as it were, in a garden, where the light, rich soil, well adapted to the riches of the mind, furnishes them with all the luxuries of high life. Generous and patriotic,

they would, no doubt, like to have the whole earth this Garden of Eden, where one could walk in slippers, and where there would be no great wooden shoes to mar the beautiful effect of fresh colors and sweet perfumes.

Under this paradisian crust is the brute earth, with its mighty quarries and precious mines, and, still deeper, its formidable volcanoes. All these must have an outlet. I have already said, and I repeat, that universal suffrage — that is, the expression of the popular will, good or bad — is a safety-valve, without which we should have nothing but explosions of civil war.

When this marvellous pledge of security is offered you, when you have found this great social counterpoise, do you wish to restrain and paralyze it? You represent intelligence; and yet you reject the foundation of it, which is good sense. You sincerely believe that a ladder of votes, starting at ignorance, would succeed in making learning predominate. You have had some experience of this under the *bourgeois* reign of Louis Philippe. The privileged elector has given you a succession of assemblies, with which I have seen you as much irritated as you are at the present day.

I know that certain means are proposed for forcing ignorance to elect capacity. One of the most practicable, at first view, is to confer on a certain class of citizens the right to elect as many deputies as some other class, evidently more numerous. I have read of so-called *radical* projects, in which it has been earnestly requested that the cities might have a right to private representatives, dispensing with the vote of the country towns. The cause of intelligence has not been wanting in arguments to create this city-aristocracy, destined to trample under foot the rights of the rural people. A strange inconsistency of political passion, otherwise called the art of attaining power by scorning the principles which they pretend to exalt!

It is quite time to have done with these guilty paradoxes, which tend to nothing less than re-establishing the reign of castes, thrusting the peasant into the lowest of all, and holding him there indefinitely. What a falsehood, then, is the republic, if it holds such ideas cheap!

Away with these republicans! Put them with the legitimists. They are just fit to act in concert; for, although the latter commenced by acknowledging the authority of the general vote,

they have determined to suppress it the moment it acts in opposition to their wishes. These two party extremes are being fatally urged on, by their principles, towards the destruction of liberty. *Our* principles are, in their hands, merely weapons of civil war. They call their compromises and fluctuations *political measures*. I said just now, and I still insist, that pure politics nowadays are nothing more than the art of aggrandizement. I feel for them the greatest contempt that could ever dwell in a human breast.

A friend of mine, a man of vast intellect,—I said so before, and I still think it,—reproaches me for not having a sufficiently keen perception of the principle of justice. Justice is his ideal, and it is a fine one. I flatter myself that it is mine also; but we cannot agree as to its application. He tells me that justice gives the power into the hands of the most capable. Who can deny that? But he believes in legal means to insure the reign of intelligence; and I deny that it is within the province of the law to enforce these means. If the State is to pronounce upon the worth of individuals, we are in the midst of theocracy. If the State punishes crime, and

rewards virtue, it is no longer the reign of laws : it is a dictatorship ; it is terror ; it is a man or an assemblage of men deciding what is right and what is wrong from his or their point of view, imposing their own beliefs, decreeing a mode of worship according to their liking. It is the *Commune* of '91 or that of 1871. It is also the royalty of divine right putting heretics to death. In fact, it is the absolute suppression of the State, that is, of the basis of society, and what constitutes the right of all and the right of each.

Let us urge governments to the encouragement of merit : they are rather prone not to discern it. Let us form governments capable of recognizing, appreciating, employing, and encouraging capability. But do not let us believe in political rights, making exceptions in favor of capacity ; for it will most surely take advantage of this, since it is not always combined with morality. If there is *justice* in recognizing it, there would be *injustice* in giving it full sway.

A more austere school would impose the most difficult tasks upon those of greatest capacity. In his admirable writings, Louis Blanc has represented ideal merit as forced to serve society without receiving any recompense for its services, — a

Utopia of youth, which I have experienced, and I certainly do not repent of having done so ; but it will not hold its ground against maturity of reflection. The State cannot force any one to do what is right. It is not a person, better and wiser than the rest of us : it is a contract which ought to provide against the encroachment of reciprocal rights. Under the honorable title of *duty*, the *rights* of one man ought not to be made to yield to any man whatsoever.

Let us allow natural rights. That will be sufficient ; for inequality of action is an anomaly, and rests chiefly upon inequality of education. The State ought to provide gratuitous education, I will not say entirely obligatory, but *inevitable*. While it sanctions absolute liberty for material labor, it cannot refuse man the means of acquiring employment for his intellectual faculties : this would be to deprive him of a natural right. It is the obvious duty of the State to render it possible for us to become equal in efficiency. It cannot make us so ; but if it create social inequalities, aided by those of nature, it is sanctioning the most fearful despotism, and reviving the past. I do not wish the Academy of Sciences to say, as did Louis XIV., “ The State is myself.” The tyranny of

intelligence does not authorize that of folly, to be sure, but it renders it inevitable, it gives rise to it irresistibly ; for every abuse engenders an abuse exactly opposite. History demonstrates this in every page.

Alas ! the French spirit is always the same, — idle because it is spontaneous, easily wearied because it is too energetic. There is always that need of rest for the body, or enjoyment for the mind, protesting against the cold and patient impartiality of the law. We do not like to be always contending. We wish public officers to protect our persons and our houses. We find that to reason with the ignorant is to lose precious time ; to labor for the enlightenment of the first person we meet is to render ourselves ridiculous. We converse with the learned, correspond with the literary, and are aristocrats from head to foot. We say to society, “ Deliver us from those ignoramus who cannot understand us ; give us a representation like that previous to ’89, when public affairs were deliberated by class, and not by poll. That is very equitable and quite republican, you see. The radicals themselves have made this request.”

This law is simply impossible. These peasant-

sheep have a will of their own, to break which, France must again be completely overthrown. A much simpler course would be to intrust to the progress of manners, and change of opinion, the responsibility of deciding matters of which these alone are master and judge. What you desire, this right of intelligence in the direction of social affairs, no one has authority to grant, but all have the power to apply. This concerns you, kings of the mind, priests of science, artists, and literary favorites of the public, *élite* of France! Impose upon yourselves this duty; be stronger than ignorance, and prove your strength. Artists, produce *chefs-d'œuvre*. Savants, make obvious and important discoveries. Economists and legislators, bring light into our political and financial chaos. Who, then, will refuse the benefits which you hold in your hands?

These blessings, you say, are very difficult to disseminate. Every thing offers opposition; but the principal impediment is the indifference of a nation steeped in the prejudices and routines of ignorance. Then we must educate it as much as possible. In helping it we are helping ourselves. Let us free ourselves from our own errors and personal prejudices, which are numerous and

obstinate ; for we are not as strong as we like to believe when we claim political preponderance. We must commence ourselves the education of the people. We are chiefly wanting in principles of true justice, methods of true science, and moral conditions of healthy inspiration. We are all more or less ill, sceptical through too much experience, or worn out by too much labor. This epoch is not for the flight of genius. There is no separate race to keep alive the sacred fire in a temple when it is extinguished on the hearthstones of the sorrowing city. We must make up our minds to bear the present state of things, and wait for the general awakening. Let us try to be up the first, but let the dawn find us working for all, and not conspiring for a few.

The liberty of all, that is to say, the appreciation of each, alone has the right and power to demand capacity in the intellectual government of the masses. No constitution can or ought to restrain the claims of an idiot to become a great man. It is for public opinion to do him justice ; it is for public good sense to put him in his proper place. If public opinion is also idiotic, it is our own fault, after all ; and the only remedy is to devote ourselves to its correction.

Ah! how much good a little modesty and self-examination would do us, were it only to reconcile us to those weak minds which we regard with such disdain, whose infirmities are owing to our inadequacy! Do we not in the enlightened world form eminently unjust estimations, make cruel determinations, exhibit a coldly implacable pride? We feel these evil instincts in ourselves. Are you astonished that those who have not been taught to reflect are barbarians, when it requires such an effort in those who do reflect to become really civilized?

My friend, I remember that, in my youth, I used to see a poor young fool, with a pale face and a long black beard, wandering about the country, busily searching the bushes, turning over stones, and sometimes entering private grounds, and stooping over the wells. When any one asked him what he was looking for, he invariably answered, "I am looking for affection."

What if we should make a little search for it? if, instead of always measuring the distance between a man of learning and a fool, a literary patrician and a slave of misery, we should search for truth in the perfume of the fields, or the transparency of the brook? Perhaps we might hear the latter murmur the word *love*.

Yes, *love*, I think, is the key to the enigma of the universe. Always to shoot forth again, to grow, and cling to life, to seek one's opposite for the purpose of assimilation, to be continually displaying the prodigy of mixture and combination, whence springs the prodigy of new productions, — these are the laws of nature. How does it happen, then, that invincible antipathies exist in the world of thought? Whence comes it that the mind rejects, with disgust, mediocrity, and nullity, as if it feared to diminish, or become poisoned by their contact? Is the danger real? I think not. Has not the mind always power over matter? How much more should a strong mind have power over a weak mind! Why does not every man who has knowledge try to impart it to him who is ignorant? This would be very easy, provided he love that ignorant one because he is a man, and not despise him because he is ignorant.

To instruct many, or to give much instruction, is difficult, yet it is the most beautiful of all the professions; but, even if one can devote himself entirely to it, the effect is slow, the task painful. Yet what useful thing is not long and difficult in its realization? We have before us the prob-

lem of the education of the masses; and we recoil in fear, because it will require much time, and will involve many disappointments and deviations, before a favorable result is perceptible. We prefer to say, "Deliver us from these barbarians so hard to enlighten. Suppress their initiative movements, which are offensive to us, and their meetings, which are a hinderance, and deprive them of political rights." Well, then, there will be no longer any need of instructing them. Reduced to a state of helots, they will have nothing to do with their rights or their duties. Society will be delivered from their political blunders. It will act without them; and they will be allowed to form a part of it, only on condition of working for it in strict obedience. Is this a solution? Because your child does not know how to read, does it follow that you have a right to drive him from your house, and deprive him of his family name?

You ought not, and you cannot do this. You owe him a home, an occupation, a name. You did not bring him into the world to abandon him to fate. You owe it to society, too, not to produce a vagrant. These duties, to the fulfilment of which your child has a claim, you contracted

towards the people the day that you delivered them from bondage. They were vegetating in nihilism : you gave them wings and life ; and now it is not for you to plunge them again into night. You believed that you ought to emancipate them completely before furnishing them with education ; and, if you consider it well, this imprudence was necessary, but fatal. It is too late to repent. We cannot take back what we have given away. The highest justice, divine justice, is opposed to such a course.

I said that absolute freedom of the ballot has been inevitable ; and this fact confirms the impossibility of State action in regard to distinction of ability. The State can never base the establishment of inequalities upon any thing but ciphers : it cannot be a judge of the political merit of the individual. If the general will force it to an aristocratic constitution, the influence of the individual can be increased only in an aristocratic sense. The figure of the tax will decide the value of the man. What coarser, more unjust, and monstrous, what more at variance with the feeling which leads us to protest against the influence of number ? The Revolution of February was instigated to get rid of money influence,

which was, in a different way, iniquitous, injurious, and senseless. When this revolution was over, the question arose as to wherein would henceforth lie the preponderance of power. The *adjunction of capacity* was eagerly demanded. The question was to give it a practical definition. They found, then, that a political definition was impossible,—that the State had neither the right nor the power to make a choice, nor to favor classes, bodies, or professions. There is but one course possible, broad, and equitable,—the right of all; and this was adopted, with all its inconveniences, dangers, and threatenings.

The situation is not changed, nor can it change, because there are no legitimate means of avoiding the consequences of absolute truth. Every thing relating to politics changes or passes away. This proclamation of universal suffrage was a political error; and that is precisely what gives this law indelibility. The republican government either saw or did not see that it was about to commit suicide. It acted under the irreducible pressure of a truth superior to itself, and signed—its own death-warrant; which was a great achievement. Let us all indorse this noble error! If we are true republicans, sincerely believing in progress,

in the necessary equality of rights, in the future of humanity, let us not allow this foundation to be removed without overthrowing the whole edifice. Let us shun that political notion which incites men of no principle to curse universal suffrage when it threatens their own interests, only to admire it when it proves satisfactory. Let us believe in eternal right, immutable truth. Let us feel that a republic is the only form of government suited to a nation possessing self-respect, and let us try to become such a nation. We have pledged ourselves by centuries of contest, by the intellectual efforts of our learned men and philosophers, by the persecution of our martyrs, by our wars sometimes triumphant, sometimes disastrous, against monarchical coalitions. Our glories and our misfortunes are our nobility; and nobility imposes the obligation of nobleness of feeling and conduct. Would we have so fought and suffered, merely to fall back into an empire or monarchy? Shall we once more intrust our destiny, and what is yet more important, our honor, to the keeping of a single man? Shall we allow Europe, which looks on without understanding us, to say that we are not capable of governing ourselves wisely, that all our aspirations and protestations were mere

boasts, that all our great ideas were but the flight of a disordered imagination, that our ideal did not take the real into consideration, and that our character grew shamefully weak when difficulties arose? When the hour has come for reaping the fruit of so many sacrifices, shall we resign our position as men and Frenchmen?

You cry, "No, no! That is not what we desire. We have cause to fear the loss of those sacred rights, honor and liberty, through the blindness of the multitude, who use the ballot to restore the men and the things of the past."

Very well: undeceive yourself. Republicanism is making rapid progress in France. Let us have the wisdom to wait, the courage to trust, and the patience to submit to any necessary deviations, and not stumble at each step upon a line that we have traced out for ourselves. We are, perhaps, in the most uncomfortable and perilous situation that was ever known: and yet, if we would only avail ourselves of it, it is a very favorable one for social regeneration. We are governed by a sovereign assembly, which is the normal condition of a republic. Within this assembly, freely chosen,—this is its sole merit,—exists every variety of opinion; and yet no one party is able to display its own

colors. The large number of claimants, or those who assume this attitude, are fortunately a cause of antagonism among themselves. None of them represents a ruling majority; and, if all have partisans in the different provinces, none of them can have the twenty-two departments of M. Thiers. There is a certain fascination in this chief of the executive power, not on account of his intelligence or his talent. The masses do not appreciate such things; they know nothing about them: what has made such an impression on their minds is that force of character which led him to accept the republican form of government as necessary and respectable, although at variance with his personal feelings. This is the first time that a man in power has been known to renounce his own opinions and sympathies, not to please a party, but for the deliverance of a nation.

Here is something quite new for France; and this abnormal result of extreme peril presents a noble precept for patriotism, and a good example to follow. He has already brought many minds to a knowledge of our present situation, which is equivalent to rousing them to a sense of their duty.

Immediately after the distresses of war and the

severities of peace, we were made to witness a senseless and odious attempt of unqualified tyranny; but it did not extend beyond the walls of Paris. The working-class did not respond to this mad appeal. They understood very well that the triumph of this party meant a Prussian master for France; and here, again, peril protected us against peril.

We are still suffering from the effect of this threat, and from the insult of foreign occupation. This evil tends to make us wise, and teaches us not to seek revolutions, never to permit them again, but to consider those bad citizens who instigate them as bad Frenchmen. From our disaster, humiliation, and sorrow, may arise one of those great lessons in which history abounds, but which the people never understand until long after they have been taught them by experience. Let us comprehend this one immediately, and become more sensible. Let us treat experience like a fruit which is spoiled by being gathered too late. Let us eat immediately; and may it do us good, not in a hundred years, but to-day! May we silence our passions, our ambitions, our repugnant feelings! Let us abandon no principle, but yield to passing events without anger and without discouragement.

May the ignorant be pardoned their errors ! No one has the right to punish ignorance ; but it ought to be enlightened. If we do not make haste, *its* destruction will involve our own, and on *our* heads, more than on *its*, will rest the blame.

CHAPTER VII.

SPIRITUAL BELIEF.

NOHANT, Oct. 28, 1871.

I HAVE just lighted a fire in the little copper-lined fireplace that shines like a mirror. The flame reflected from above and from the sides fills the chamber with its brightness. The curtain is drawn aside. It is one o'clock in the morning. The full moon is shining in the pure heavens, where the stars are almost eclipsed by its brilliancy. It sheds a blue tint over the room from the reflection of the blue furniture and drapery, while the white flames of the blazing pine irradiate the hearth. Every thing in the little room seems to be dancing, — the portraits of the children, the little figures on the drapery, the arabesques on the carpet. How gay, sparkling, and lively is the first fire of autumn! but how solemn and austere is the first frosty night! There is a lovely bouquet gathered this morning from an abundant supply in

the flower-border; healthy-looking roses of unusual size; the last roses, the most beautiful of the year. They will indeed be the last. The beds of mignonette have given me their farewell perfume. The periwinkles, the marigolds, the snapdragons, have their last representatives in this vase. An ominous vapor is spreading over the glass; and here, in a little corner, a diamond network is forming. Alas! this is no harmless hoar-frost: it is the real, unrelenting kind, that in one night passes over the earth like a fire, blackening the leaves, softening the stems, destroying color, and strewing the ground with withered branches and mournful *débris*. This is the first touch of winter, the fatal kiss which kills the sanguine beauty of belated vegetation. While, though prepared for a struggle with the first cold, I am availing myself of the physical comfort which fire procures for the human race, all the smiling family of flowers are expiring, and the earth is putting on its mourning garb.

Who would believe it? To see the moon so beautiful, the sky so blue, the tall, motionless pines marking their shadows so distinctly upon the shining gravel, one might fancy himself invited to a feast of silence, to the deep and

speechless joy of contemplation from the ark of security. *No!* this is bitter treason. Death is pursuing his noiseless and invisible way through the groves sown with diamonds; and, as he passes back and forth, he mows down every thing within his reach. Here he has overlooked a few pink anemones; there some fresh daisies are hastening to display their beauty, be it only for a day. Alas! they will not be permitted this day of triumph. The cruel scythe that overlooks nothing has discovered them. Every thing is dead.

Last year at this time I was not thinking of flowers. My sympathy was not bestowed upon roses, but upon the millions of men lying strewn upon the ground. The war is finished; but we hardly sleep with both eyes closed, although the evil is withdrawn, and the worst of the misery is over. We allow ourselves time to get warmed, to gaze on the moon, to think of the children who are sleeping, and will not be forced by invasion to spend the rest of the night in the fields. The present moment is our own. Our house is still standing. Have we a right to complain of any thing, when so many roofs lie shattered on the ground, so many lives have been destroyed, which can never bloom again?

Since the first cold weather and the first fire justify me in spending a night of idleness, I shall avail myself of it to renew the acquaintance of a person forgotten of late, who is no other than myself. This person, who lives far from noise and activity, is often absorbed in her own affairs; and her recreations belong to a dear family, in whose midst her existence is complete without the need of a consciousness of life. Perchance she collects her thoughts, and asks herself this question, which she has often before evaded: Of what use are you in the world?

Of what use, indeed! Who knows? Perhaps we ought, from time to time, to undergo self-examination, lest we forget something that needs attention. We should not rely too much on the apparent health of the mind.

Let me see if this room and this fire will help me to locate in the past the person whom I am seeking at present. This room that person occupied in her youth, when she was eager for reading, and possessed full confidence in herself. She often rose at ten o'clock, and read till three. When she had finished reading on winter nights, she would warm herself a little, which was not always easy, for the fireplace used to smoke at the slightest

change in the weather. While warming herself she would reflect on what she had been reading, and, with the blindness of inexperience, grope her way to criticism. The contradictory beliefs entertained by great minds puzzled her; and she sought to harmonize these lights of different colors, which shone around her as shone then and shines still the flame upon this hearth, and the reflection of the moon into this room.

Brought up in a convent, and elated with poetical devotion, she calmly read the philosophers, believing, at first, that she could easily refute their arguments by her conscience; but she learned to love these philosophers, and to feel God greater than he had ever yet appeared. The little Catholic garlands of the Restoration froze during these winter nights; and a mysterious plant grew upon an ideal altar in a world beyond this, which it filled with a multitude of flowers and innumerable shoots. It was a virgin forest, with an endless number of convolvuli uniting to form an infinity of intertwinings in an infinity of vitality. This was heaven; and the mind of the person who was thus musing wandered into this infinity, borne thither by that vegetation which was composed, flowers and fruit, of all the souls

in the universe, regenerated, made fruitful, immortalized, by the Spirit of God, which was the sap.

This was very vague, but very grand; and, every time that the vision returned, it seemed to have grown, as if the sap had increased throughout the whole and throughout its parts.

But for a long time this mental dazzling lacked something: it was a personal feeling. Catholicism teaches us to love God as a person: philosophy extends love by making reason intervene. The dreamy soul longed for love; and Omnipotence, the object of its admiration, did not suffice for its affections. Infinite love was wanting in this exuberant creation, where the force of regeneration was inexhaustible; and the world, which serves us as a medium, manifests only the struggle of existences encroaching upon one another. In this virgin forest, the living grew fatally fat on death; and the Author of death and life seemed indifferent to these alternatives of slumber and activity. Whence it appears, that no existence is precious, and that the wise man will pass unmoved through this universal scramble for salvation. Accordingly universal life loses all joy, all consciousness of strength. Where love does not dwell, is a void.

Then the thoughtful mind of which I am endeavoring to give a slight description, and which at that time was seeking to regain its religion of the past, tried to rise through prayer. Rejecting the impeding form of Catholicism, it unconsciously became Protestant. It went still farther, and improvised its mode of communion with the Divinity. It formed for itself a religion suited to its growth, commensurate with its understanding. It was probably not a grand conception: its whole merit lay in sincerity and independence.

What floated over this billow, what has floated through all ages of life, and swum without weariness, was the need of a belief in divine love, which blossoms to perfection in the great universe, in spite of appearances proclaiming the absence of all superior goodness, of all pity, and consequently all justice; for, having endowed us with human nature, to scornfully abandon this weakness would be unfatherly, iniquitous. I should prefer to feel that God did not exist, than to believe him indifferent.

When this perplexed individual allowed herself to be persuaded that such might be the case, she sometimes became atheistic for four and twenty hours.

If she had discovered the answer to her problem, she would have been before her time and her age. She met with nothing but fugitive accords that, crossing her ideal, left, as it were, a trace of sweet harmony. At those rare moments when, in the calmness of her conscience and the allayment of her misgivings, she seemed to feel the wings of the maternal Divinity fluttering above her head, she experienced the only happiness which can be felt in solitude, — sensibility ; I might almost say a sensation of the Divine presence.

External life banished these thoughts for a long time, or relieved their oppressive weight ; and the sights and mental reflections which this life unrolled were merged into a common whole where philosophic individuality seems to have become entirely effaced during long periods. Our present object is to discover and to renew the chain which connects the old age of this individual with her youth. Nothing could be easier. This chain has been loose for a long time, it has become entangled with many passing ideas ; but it has never broken. It is there. I feel it. The dialogue with the unknown is about to be continued ; but I cannot say where it left off, nor what was the last word exchanged. It is like a book without beginning

or end, and without the division of chapters; where each page reminds me that it has been read before.

It is freezing. This temperature is fatal to vegetation. It is unfavorable to the circulation of either sap or blood. The earth is sad: man is suffering. The certainty that in other climes this night is day, and this frost a mild solar warmth, does not prevent the plant from dying, nor the man without shelter from taking cold. General compensations from which we do not derive immediate advantage do not take the place of sensibility; and satisfied reason does not console those who are not content with reason alone. It is the same with faith. The evil which educes good does not justify the universe in allowing itself to be governed by brute force; and, if God has been able to prevent evil and suffering, it has not been his will so to do. The God of Job was only an eloquent rhetorician, and Job was a coward to be so submissive.

We must either not believe in God at all, or we must relinquish all the notions that we have thus far imbibed. We must give up estimating his attributes by our own, and acknowledge that our goodness is not his goodness, our justice not his

justice, and that he has intrusted to *us* the care of watching over ourselves, without ever alleviating, in defiance of Nature's laws, the difficulties and perils of our existence. This is left to work out its own destiny, without any visible compassion or assistance. It is for us to draw from Nature her secrets; it is for human science and industry to discover what is needed from the inexhaustible reservoir whence flow the conditions of universal life.

The first man who conceived the idea of conquering fire, and making it subservient to the wants of his fellow-creatures, by constructing a fireplace where the smoke might escape, was more humane towards man than noisy Jupiter, crashing the cedars with his thunderbolt, and living in the region of the sun in a state of nudity, without ever considering whether the inhabitants of the earth knew how to provide themselves with clothing. Yet man thanks Jupiter for creating fire, but never thinks of being grateful for the knowledge of its use. He blesses Flora for bestowing flax and hemp, and the earth for supporting those animals which furnish wool and fur. For every thing that he utilizes, he thanks the benevolent beings who have done nothing more

than allow him to appear on earth at the proper time, — that is, at the time decreed by the great law, — in order that he may find there the conditions of his existence. These gods of antiquity, this Jehovah himself, who includes them all, and gives us a loftier idea of the power of nature centred in him, — these are the forces and properties of matter. We need a material religion, to secure their favor, to prevent them from becoming angry, and applying the scourges which they keep in reserve for the chastisement of the impious.

This childish and barbarous notion has entered the human brain, and become incrustated there by its descent from father to son: it is ever the same, with heaven and hell as a cover for the illogical manifestations of the apparent intentions of the Divinity towards us mortals.

Thus ever a God formed in our own image, foolish or sinful, vain or childish, irritable or tender, after our manner; fanciful if his caprice acts in this world; sophistical and casuistic, if he waits till after death to indemnify us for the wrong that he has done us during life.

Communion with such a God is impossible to me, I confess. He is effaced from my memory, and I could not find him in any part of my room;

neither is he in the garden, nor in the fields, nor upon the waters, nor in the azure dome of stars, nor in the churches where men kneel. It is a word extinct, a dead letter, a finished thought. Such a belief, such a God, cannot exist in my mind.

And yet every thing is divine. This beautiful sky, this fire which burns so brightly, that human industry which grants me human life (that is, the power to indulge in peaceful revery without being frozen like a plant), that thought which is working itself out in my brain, this heart which loves, that repose of will leading me to more extended love, all this, spiritual and material, is animated by something higher than either, — the unknown origin of every thing tangible, the hidden force which is the cause of all that has been and ever will be.

If all is divine, even matter ; if every thing is superhuman, even man, — then God is in all things. I see and I touch him ; I feel him, because I love him, because I have always loved and felt him, because he dwells within me to a degree proportionate to my insignificance. For all that, I am not God ; but I came from him, and to him I must return. Still that is only a form of speech ; for he has neither left me, nor taken me back, and, in

my present life, I am separated from him only by the limit to which I am held by the infancy of the human race. Centuries and centuries will pass away, and new lights will come to us, as they have several times already. This detachment from the notion of religious idolatry is a light obtained. It is not a loss of religious feeling, as persistent idolaters affirm, but quite the reverse: it is a restitution of faith to the true Divinity; it is a step towards him, an abjuration of the dogmas which were an outrage.

Formerly he was represented as having a special home in a celestial region. Sculptors seated him upon a throne: painters surrounded him with clouds or rays. His face was the nearest type of ideal beauty that the masters of art could conceive,—a blissful simplicity, forcing human conception to rise above itself. Modern thought does not need these temples and statues. It refuses to confine to form what is incommensurable and imponderable. Images are now only symbols. We see God wherever he manifests himself to our feeble eyesight; and imagination, which has a right to the counsels of sentiment and reason, chooses to see him especially in beautiful objects, and in great productions of nature

and of mind. But what we thus see and touch is only the radiation of our own mind. None of our senses is adapted to the vision of God; and we can never render him an external worship corresponding to our ideal. Enthusiasm is a disease, in which the apparitions are in accordance with the brain by which they are produced.

Why should He who fills all space be assigned a special place of abode? Why should the Spirit which animates every thing have a fixed point of emanation? To be near us, he does not need to descend from empyreal spheres. He is with me continually; but I should err in wishing him to be with me alone, and occupied exclusively with my concerns. I ought to be contented with the intellectual sense which has been given me, that I may feel and possess as much of him as is appreciable to this corrupt sense. I ought also to be contented with the words which my insufficient vocabulary furnishes me for designating this Being; for he has no more a true name, in the language of men, than he has a decided form for the human eye. As a child, I tried to picture him to myself: as an adult, I dare not make the attempt. I have grown to understand that the Infinite is a conception not beneath, but beyond, reason.

Formerly we wished that he would reveal himself by miracles, or sink into the region of shadows. What was undiscoverable caused us fear. To-day the undiscoverable looms above us without overwhelming us; and the ardent impulse which in our lucid moments urges us towards him is divine, only because it meets with no earthly object which can give it satisfaction. It is the most subtle and exquisite part of our being which is moved at the idea of God. The too frequent use of this faculty would cause insanity. Daily practice in established formulas stultifies us, and renders us incapable of discerning the least particle of the divine ideal.

At this moment, while I am reasoning with myself on the subject, and recalling the straitened and popular forms under which this ideal was revealed to my childhood, I cannot feel its truth. I might say, without sin, that I do not believe in it; for no one is bound to believe in what does not forcibly strike his consciousness. I have had, and still do have, vibrations with the Infinite; but this is not, and ought not to be, the normal condition of the human individual. He ought to respond to the vibration of tangible nature, and not isolate himself from humanity, lest the con-

necting links break asunder, and he be left solitary and useless.

The time will come when we shall not speak of God needlessly, but as seldom as possible. We shall not teach dogmatically of his attributes, or dispute concerning his nature. We shall not impose on any one the obligation of prayer, but allow each to worship in the sanctuary of his own conscience. And this will happen when we are truly religious. *Then* we shall all be so; and the attempt to establish a prescribed religion will be regarded as blasphemy. The love which we bear him will be of a bashful nature: prayer will become mysterious, and the fear of being unworthy will silence the pen of the theologian and the preacher. This great idea, which cannot be approached with a troubled conscience, will not sanction ridiculous processions upon the highways, or ceremonies borrowed from paganism. The remembrance of these profanations will have but an archæological interest, like the symbolic obscenities which decorate the cathedrals of the middle age. The place of worship of the purified soul will no longer be a tabernacle liable to be entered by thieves, the key of which is kept in the priest's pocket. There will be then no

need of tolerance for tardy faiths. They will fall with the threats and thunderbolts of the Church demolished or deserted. When the ancient gods are mentioned, they will suggest only allegories. Their history will be that of the people who have invented them. The era of faith will commence when all our fancies are enshrouded.

To-day the independent thinker who is tolerant towards all faiths, out of respect to human liberty, yet demands the same freedom of thought in the sphere of his own meditations, experiences a sensation of unrestraint and peaceful submission to his own faith. This is his inward treasure, his modest reliance, his humble and inviolable peace of mind: it is his secret joy, the recompense which he makes himself for not having gone astray, or suffered himself to be influenced by foolish or evil passions: it is his refuge in the hour of great distress, when he can say to himself, "I have not deserved this; but that atom of divine sense which has been bestowed upon me cannot be taken from me. I am yet worthy to hold it in the depths of my soul, and to offer up to it, as a burnt sacrifice, all the light and love that is within me; for the worst chastisement of our errors is a loss of the notion of the Divinity;

and this man inflicts upon himself, as he does all evils from which he suffers, because his will is not sufficient to drive them away, partly for want of science, partly for want of devotion, and partly for want of sincerity."

The fire is still burning; the moon is sinking behind the tall trees, and the owl is uttering his doleful note like a farewell sigh. There are, as yet, no signs of daylight; and I wander back, in thought, to that time when those sleepless nights often brought, to the half-developed individual that I was then, heart-rending or joyous solutions, according to the degree of knowledge which I had acquired, or according to the course, more or less direct, which I had pursued.

What I sought then was the connection between faith and reason; and I am seeking for it still. At that time I was in quest of the impossible, because my faith rested upon a religion whose formula was chimerical: now I have a perception of the possible, I may say the evidence of my synthesis, because I am free from all prescribed formula. I know that no human being has the right to call himself God, pope, prophet, or king of souls under any title what-

soever. The idea of God can come to us only from God himself; and we cannot feel his presence merely by desiring to feel it. Our mind must undergo a preparation or be absolutely pure. We must rise above ourselves, above the influence of passing objects, above ideas accepted by the multitude without inquiry, above those immediate political interests which affect the religion of a country. In short, we must feel deeply and earnestly the necessity of believing in an ideal sun, unlike the stars of heaven, shedding its rays upon all things, abstract and real. We must feel that excess of enthusiasm and adoration which tangible beings do not demand, and which would be superfluous in a mind unconscious of God. Our very aspirations for the infinite prove the existence of the spirit which has implanted within us this ray of infinity. No being has a faculty without an end, or aspirations without a means.

Now that my vigil is over, and I have recovered my lost *me*, I feel God: I love and I believe. This *me*, between which and myself the round of daily duties has threatened a separation, has regained its true value. Wandering in solitude, it would have engendered nothing but fan-

cies. Face to face with its Supreme Origin, it is not alone, and its monologue is an inward hymn, whose distant and mysterious echo proves that it is not lost in space.

Thou whom the egotistic prayer of the idolater profanes and misinterprets, who hearest the heart's cry, to which men are deaf, and dost not answer, like them, with the impious *no* of cold reason; Thou who art the inexhaustible source which alone can slake that unquenchable thirst for the good and beautiful; to whom belong all the better thoughts and acts of life, trials endured, duties accomplished, all that purifies existence and keeps love ever fresh,—I will not pray to thee. I have nothing to ask which the law of life has not furnished me; and, if I have not availed myself of it, it is my own fault or that of humanity, of which I am a responsible and dependent member. My communication with thee shall not be the mumbling of the mendicant who asks to be supported without work. It is for me to discover the course marked out for me, and to accomplish the task assigned. A miracle will not intervene to relieve my exertions: so let there be no supplications, no *paternosters* to the Spirit who has granted, for our use, a spark

of his own flame. Communion with thee is not expressed in words that could be pronounced or written. Language was discovered for the exchange of thought between man and man. With thee there is no language: all communion is within the soul, where there is no reasoning, no deductions, and no formal thoughts; where all is fire and enthusiasm, wisdom and strength. Upon these sacred heights a union, impossible upon earth, is consummated between delicious tranquillity and unutterable rapture.

CHAPTER VIII.

1861. — LETTER TO ROLLINAT. — DEATH IN LIFE.

I AM to start next week. Your friend of old times, who has travelled before, is going to travel again. He was old when he wrote you such sad letters: now he is more than a hundred; but years amount to nothing in a man's age. Some people live much in a short time, and their years count double. Take him for such as he is, you who have so much patience. He does not walk so fast as formerly, but he has been walking a longer time. His bones can stand the sun better, because they are chilled through; and now after having shown signs, last autumn, of his departure on that longest of journeys, from which no traveller returns, he is starting to tread once more the soil of this planet, poor little world full of tears and smiles, obstinate delusions, and hopes more obstinate still. And so, my friend, your traveller, weary of his long rest which has not rested him, has decided that the best kind of rest is motion, since he

is a son of the earth; for the earth never stops, and yet is never weary.

To love this earth is to love life, you will say. But stop! When we believe in eternal and universal life, as both of us have always believed, even in our darkest days, we do not feel that we quit life by quitting this little world, and we flatter ourselves that we have discovered a better by discovering a shorter way. We may, then, become weary of the life of this world, and yet not believe in non-existence. It seems to me, though, that minds uneasy at remaining here have not the consciousness of a soul, that imperishable and indefatigable traveller which has many things to see elsewhere, and, on the whole, has more duties to perform than rewards to receive in this poor province of the great Urania.

But *I*, dear friend, love all that belongs to this universal domain. I love it now, not only because certain rays of light have emerged from the fog of my troubled mind, but also, perhaps especially, because I have had an opportunity to be dearly beloved. God gives us these opportunities as a remedy for all our troubles; and should we not be ungrateful for this if we wished to leave before our appointed time?

Surely it would not be right. Those only who have none left to receive or reciprocate their love feel a delight in death.

A few years ago, when I lost my granddaughter Jeanne, I made no great display of my grief; but I felt a longing to die which alarmed me as something wrong. It was a disease of sorrow. I felt as though this child were calling to me from another world, where, in her weakness and solitude, she needed me, while the other objects of my affection no longer required the attachment of a broken heart and a dejected spirit. One night I dreamed that she said to me, "Rest easy: it is well with me." I awoke resigned. I had nothing more to overcome but the sorrow of my own loss, and that I could do. Did the child speak to me, or was it my conscience? It matters not: I was ill. I tried to recover, and returned to Italy.

A year later, in the forest of Fontainebleau, I had a sort of dream while awake. It was on a mild, damp day in the early part of March. There was not a single leaf on the trees; and I never saw the old oaks of the Bas-Bréau look so magnificent, with their long branches washed by the rains, and covered with a velvet coating of

moss. The rocks, too, looked clean in their wintry coldness ; and the gravel, with its soft, golden hue, showed distinctly the footprints of the roe and the fox. I sat down alone for a few moments, between two rocks, in one of the wildest nooks. Just where the sand had hollowed out an artificial path, free from imprint of any kind, I saw the earth turn around, move away, and disappear. In a slight depression in this narrow fissure, my imagination pictured the footprint of a child ; a single footprint, as if the sweet phantom had tried to be near me, and yet could not make up its mind to rest both feet upon this earth of sorrows. I could not restrain my tears, a stream not as yet dried up, but replenished by rest. The child burst out into one of its merriest peals of laughter, like the music of a bird, which had so many times filled me with joy. Perhaps it was the laugh of a robin redbreast ; but what matters it ? Life was singing while my useless tears were flowing. My child was alive and happy. I must accustom myself to do without her, and not be jealous of God, who had taken her from me to provide her with a better home.

Almighty God, thou makest us optimists ; and yet what deeper anguish than to feel that we

have survived those who, in the common course of events, ought to have strewed our grave with flowers!

But all the pitiless notions of this world change their aspect, even entirely lose their meaning, before the light of an ideal notion. When I live on the vulgar appreciation of events, the most unsatisfactory possible, I become discouraged, and my heart sinks; but let the light shine, and I could subdue monsters. There is no more death, but life regenerated and purified; it is the feast prepared for those whom my jealous tears perhaps offend and distress.

Yet it is not a *consoled* traveller who is writing this letter. He has not acquired with age a taste for those things which satisfy ambition, and render the imagination sober and benumbed. Some people who look on the dark side say that he has changed his madness, and that, weary of walking at random upon the earth, he has started for the moon. Never mind! Wherever his mind is, his heart is with you. This unsatisfied traveller is not consoled for his loss; but, better still, he has forgotten it. He used to think too much of himself; he did nothing but plume his feathers, scold and complain. Now his thoughts run as

little as possible in that direction: he travels either among the stars when his limbs are consigned to repose by sedentary occupations, or upon the mountain paths which he has always loved, where he would be glad, when his time comes, to die in the open air, with the sun above his head, and a tuft of grass for his pillow.

The thought of dying in bed is very disagreeable. You know that three months ago I went to sleep in perfect health and in good spirits, and for six or eight days was unconscious. When I returned to myself, I seemed to be just leaving the ruins of a castle where I had been feeling very cold. Those about me might have been singing Pergolesi's ballad, for the words still rang in my ears, —

“ Il sonno l'assassina.”

But this murderous sleep I did not feel. I had not suffered, and my sensation on returning to consciousness was agreeable. At first I did not know that I was in my own room; but as I had been longing, in my dreams, to see the dear ones who were watching with me, their presence did not astonish me, and I entreated them to take me home. A moment after, I recognized an old portrait that was gazing upon me with a martial

yet benevolent mien, and I thanked the good souls who had brought me from that evil abode where I imagined I had been attacked with fever.

That was all. Is death like this, — so simple an affair, a dream that passes away, a state in which we do not witness the tears of those who hold us dear, nor realize that we are about to leave them, but enter thoughtlessly the unknown world, without being able to say to God, “Here I am,” or to the beloved ones left behind, “Farewell”? This would be very comfortable, but too much so; for, whether there be suffering or joy at the last moment, we should wish at least to be conscious of its approach. Man feels the need of bidding his family adieu, and putting his house in order. It seems as though his farewell duty were to say to them, “Rest in peace: I shall not forget you. I am obliged to go; but I feel sure that, absent as well as present, I shall love you always.”

So, having relinquished life without regret and without an effort, — for to be unconscious of living is equivalent to being dead, — I returned to this existence without any feeling of amazement, or ecstacy of delight, almost like the child who enters the world without knowing whence he

comes or whither he is going. When I beheld the dear ones around my bed, those who had watched and wept over me, I felt ashamed of having been so indifferent to their trouble, and so heedless of their grief. Yet it was not my fault. I had been neither courageous, philosophical, curious, nor ambitious. I had slept too soundly, and my heart had slept with the rest of my body; but it seemed none the less cruel and ungrateful that I had not been able to rouse myself. Tears, so many tears for me! and had I deserved them? Truly, I had not supposed myself so much beloved; or, rather, I had become accustomed to it as something quite natural. What joy was in those affectionate hearts, when I was restored to life! What attention, what anxiety, what indulgence, were lavished on me during the time of my convalescence! I felt then, and have felt ever since, that when we leave tender and loving friends we do not belong to ourselves, that it is a crime to be careless of our welfare, and that we ought to value both eternal life and this short life, in which one day of reciprocal affection is worth all the joys of eternity.

So you will imagine that I was not sorrowful at that time. I felt some little dread of infirm old

age, although I was not troubled then with any infirmity ; but I armed myself with courage for the time, which was perhaps fast approaching, when my legs, those valuable and docile servants of the will, would turn rebellious, and I should be able to behold the summits of the mountains only from below. Now that their strength has been renewed by rest, I am once more enabled to climb ; and, with the thoughtlessness of youth, I take no heed for the morrow.

He is right, perhaps, who feels that every thing is for the best : nor is this belief a recantation if he has formerly believed to the contrary ; for even then he might have been right. Every thing of which man is convinced by sincere reasoning is true, from a certain point of view ; because this world presents perpetual contrast, and what at one moment is in the deepest shadow at another is resplendent with light. Argument is no doubt a fine thing ; it exercises a faculty which enlarges the discernment of the mind ; but it has no effect upon grief, for this alone is positive and beyond discussion. One argument may be answered by another ; but what answer is there for tears and lamentations ?

Wisdom, then, is no cure for suffering, but it

gives us the fortitude to endure it; and, as all the forces of the mind are dependent on one another, the more fortitude we possess the more we suffer. The cure for grief is kindness and affection. An expressive emotion demands a responsive emotion. Wounds of the sensibility require the balm of sensibility. Ah, how different is the treatment used by the heart, from that of the mind! Our age of lassitude and abuse either does not realize this, or does not care to realize it. We shall eventually adopt this treatment; and deceitful reality, which, in fact, is nothing more than the verification of events of the moment, will have to flee with these events, and yield its place to the true instincts, the everlasting wants, of nature.

Sincerity, thou art the essence of God himself; and, even if men could banish thee forever from their presence, thou wouldst still exist in the merest work of creation, in the pure melody of a bird, in the unquestionable beauty of a plant, in the gentle breath of a zephyr. That is why I delight in the open air, and in wild scenery. I am not actuated by hatred of my fellow-beings. They have done me no harm: some would have liked to injure me; but others have done me a

great deal of good. As to the multitude who are not acquainted with me, and of whom I can judge only by the aggregate of their deeds made manifest by their lives, I feel bound to assert, notwithstanding the great amount of indulgence due them, that they are going astray, and have decidedly taken the wrong paths. They have reached a crisis of fearful materialism, which has not even the merit of liberty and passion, because it is concealed under a covenant of revolting hypocrisy.

In the course of events, man is influenced by constant re-action. He eventually becomes tired of his own vices, thus rendering reproach hardly necessary. Let us look for better times. Humanity, poor, dear patient, thou wilt suffer much from thy faults, but thou wilt recover. I will tarry in some wilderness until the pestilence pass away ; for it provokes thee to hear the truth, and thou clingest to thy sin with as much rage as if it were a blessing of which others were trying to deprive thee. Flow on, then, thou river roughened by the tempest, since this torrent and these falls are needed for thy purification ; and let us dreamers look up and see if the snows have melted, and if the Easter daisies will soon be in

blossom. The world is seized with a mania for money. Every one is eager to acquire it, and would give his heart's blood for its possession. The kings of finances hug one another in despair, break out into accusations, and are ready to strangle each other over their strong-boxes. Israel is rent like a mantle. The Christian profession do no better. The so-called defenders of the faith of Christ are willing that the people should cause their own destruction for the sake of a question of material interest in behalf of a tyranny which is, in fact, a negation of the gospel. Poets and artists even are becoming as much interested in the positive as financiers and the clergy. They seek it not only from personal motives, but introduce it into art, and attempt to portray it, incapable as they are of understanding the ideal or making it comprehensible to others.¹

No hatred, no disclaim, but farewell for the present, dear ruined society. There will be flatterers enough to tell thee that thou art perfect, that there is nothing in thee to censure or correct, and that those individuals whose minds are tainted with pure and poetical ideas are pedants

¹ Ten years ago, events suggested these reflections. I do not see that materialism has bettered the condition of things.

who aspire to the title of reformers, or fools of the most dangerous kind, however little they may be disgraced with ingenuousness. Let us see if Nature, too, has acquired a taste for the artificial, and a passion for what is becoming ; if holly-trees have adorned themselves with ears of corn, and if ivies are trying to bear roses. I think not.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIND IN SLEEP.

TO ROLLINAT. — JOURNAL.

TAMARIS, 1861.

NOW that I am feeling better, and my strength is returning, the country looks charming, and I am recovering that happy faculty of finding it more beautiful the longer I look at it. My son has left for Africa, and Mancean is entirely taken up with his engraving; so, for the last few days, I have lived almost alone, doing my writing at home, and pursuing my botanical studies during my walks of six or eight hours. One might almost live by his organs of sight in this region of delightful scenery, where the eye feeds on splendor, — dazzling lights, tempered by soft shades. All this beauty diffuses itself through the mind, curing it of that sort of blind sadness which results from physical weakness. As soon as it yields to re-action, the weakness of the body rapidly diminishes.

Why do I feel that desire, every evening, to

exaggerate in memory the beauty which I have been admiring during the day? Perhaps it is the necessity for re-action against that preciseness to which I am confined by my duties as author. I take mental notes, scrupulously exact; and I know that, in this regard, my memory will not prove treacherous. This is quickly done, thanks to my habit of observation; and then I begin to take my enjoyment. I feast like a glutton, and when I am satiated I feel happy. After coming to myself, I dine like a bird, and drink like a grasshopper; for my stomach is not right yet, and I am intoxicated. Every thing large that I have seen appears to me immense; what was austere becomes formidable, and what lovely, paradisiacal: yet Nature's beauties exceed our most extravagant fancies. I reverence her, and despise myself continually. It is a kind of intoxication, a state of hallucination. My will is not accountable, and my reason is powerless.

Do we, then, possess an instinct for remodeling reality? If so, it is the grain of folly to which we all have to submit when we become the prey of any passion; and I am, just at present, the excited prey of the passion of contemplation.

In sleep this instinct is carried to a still greater

extent. I behold the real aberrations of nature, and I follow them by an analogous mental aberration. For example: last night, I dreamed of the strangest adventures, which seemed to me perfectly natural. At first I was in India with you, and Maurice was running before us, chasing butterflies with Jean our servant. We entered a magnificent forest of cypress-trees, whose branches touched our heads. Were they cypress-trees? You thought not. Suddenly I noticed, at the extremity of certain branches, singular ramifications, terminating in a fruit the size of a nut. This fruit confusedly suggested to my mind a human form; and, as I gazed upon it, I observed that the likeness was more apparent as the fruit approached maturity.

“You have seen all that you care to see!” you exclaimed. “Pretty soon you will believe in *vegetable homunculi*.”

“Indeed,” I replied, gathering one from the branches, “I not only believe, but feel sure. Here is a perfect homunculus!”

I can hear now your exclamation of surprise as you picked from another branch a living homunculus. Mine was not ripe: therefore it clung tightly to the stem. It had a perfect human form,

but was green, still in a vegetable state, and, in plucking it, I had severed the thread of its future life; but I had no time for regret. Innumerable quantities were swaying in the branches about us, or climbing to the tops of the trees. You held yours as if afraid either of stifling it, or letting it escape, while I was busy searching for another subject in a similar state, that is, just entering upon life, and so recently loosened in its hold upon the vegetable tissue that it could be gathered while in a state of torpor. I succeeded in procuring a little female specimen; and we both ran to call Maurice, in high glee at having made so fine a discovery.

“Pooh!” cried he: “I have my pockets full. They are nothing rare for this country; but they are good for nothing: you cannot raise them. As yours are still alive, put them back upon their trees.”

I do not remember whether we took his advice. A cloud passed over the forest, and I seemed to be crossing a vast steppe with Eugène Delacroix. We were on our way to a city, of which the slated spires in the distance loomed up against the white sky. There was no road. The season was undecided; winter on one side, spring on the other.

The ground was slippery, cracked, and abounding in holes filled with half-melted snow. Delacroix stopped, and said to me, "I do not see any path. Nobody can ever have passed this way. Let us proceed no farther. The crust of the earth has not as yet been formed here; therefore let us seek a soil upon which we can walk." Such a geological reason having appeared to me unquestionable, I followed him; and, shortly after, he remarked, "Here is the *moving prairie*. We are all right."

I asked for no explanation, but I paused in amazement at this prairie. It was an immense, undulating carpet of verdure, like the Campagna of Rome on the side of the Via Aurelia, but not composed of grass that is withered in summer and rotten in winter. The earth was as fine as though it had been sifted, and the microscopic clover-grass grew as thick as moss. At first it appeared to me of a uniform dull green; but very soon I observed the variety of shades and reflections of the aquamarine. The land was so elevated as to give us an extensive horizon; and light vapory clouds, tinted by the rays of the sun, floated about in the sky.

"Come," said Delacroix: "do not stop any

longer to look. Let us hurry on, or the clouds will get ahead of us."

Not doubting, of course, any more than he, that we could keep up with the clouds, I started; but I was unable to make any progress: something held me back.

"Pray, how are you walking?" he asked. "You are not doing it the right way. You ought not to resist the motion of the prairie. Put on your sea-legs, keep your equilibrium, and let the prairie carry you along."

I do not know whether I managed myself as I ought; but I felt the prairie rising in solid waves, and bearing me rapidly along, like an object that floats over a swell, without taking any active part in its own progress.

"This is a very agreeable manner of travelling," I observed to my companion. "I am taking an endless journey, without suffering the least fatigue. But you ought to inform me of the cause of this phenomenon. Suppose we stop a while, that we may not quit this delightful prairie too soon."

"To stop here would be impossible; for the prairie keeps on rolling, and we must follow its undulations. Nothing is simpler than this phe-

nomenon. It results from the nature of the grass, and the power exerted by the ground in forcing its growth. When it is fully developed, the plain will remain quiet and immovable till the next spring."

Here my dream became confused ; and I seemed to be in my garden at Nohant, with Maurice and Mancean, looking at a great white cloud in the heavens, which were with this exception very blue. Masons were at work on a staircase out of doors, adjoining the house ; of which staircase there did not appear to be the slightest need. Mancean had ordered it, and was attempting to explain to us its use, which related to the white cloud that was rising in the heavens.

"You know," said he, "that important events are about to take place in the upper regions. It was indispensable to have an observatory here, and I had to commence by building a staircase. But stop ; the exhibition is about to begin. Walk up."

I ascended the staircase alone, and reached an elevation which overlooked the tops of the tall linden-trees. The thick cloud, still cream-colored, spread over the whole firmament. Then I heard the following dialogue from below : —

Mancean.— Ah! what a pity! It is all a failure. *It is taken away!*

Maurice.— That is true: *it is taken away.* What will you do? Let us go up and take a look.

And Maurice came up.

“*What is taken away?*” I asked.

“Zounds, the thunder! We relied upon that to burst the cloud of silver which is descending upon our heads; but the silver of the cloud is nothing more or less than a hyperborean world, which is just ready to fall, and the thunder has been taken away by the ice. There will be no bursting of any thing. The thing is a failure.”

“Not exactly a failure; for this is a magnificent sight, the equal of which I have never before witnessed.”

The white cloud, now become solid and compact, descended in slow majesty. Soon after, I perceived that an enormous glacier was approaching, head first, and forming a vault above our heads. Through an oblique opening in this the rays of the sun were admitted, and cast the most splendid reflections upon this strange world which was about to settle quietly but irrevocably upon our own. Deep valleys, resembling tunnels about

to cover us, shone like the sapphire ; and icicles as brilliant as diamonds seemed ready to nail us down with their gigantic points. All this was frightful, yet sublime. At the same time the surface of our world began to congeal at the approach of this formidable object, and, in its turn, to bristle with icicles projecting from the bluish-colored snow with which the soil was covered. There were now but a few steps of the staircase by which Mancean had joined us that were not filled, either by the marvellous ice which was descending, or the not less beautiful ice that was rising.

“There !” exclaimed Mancean in distraction. “You see that the thunder is destroyed, and that our world is coming to an end.”

“Your explanation is horrible,” replied Maurice. “The thunder has nothing to do with this. Our world has volcanoes enough for its defence.”

“You and your mother are very incredulous. We are all lost !”

“Well,” returned Maurice, “let us endeavor to see as much as we can before all is over.”

Indeed, it was all over. The icy vault, contracting more and more, seemed at last to rest its circumference upon the horizon. We were in

a glaucous light, similar to that of an aquarium. The vault sank down upon us without a sound, without a shock, without any perceptible warning to humanity, if the latter had not already disappeared. Maurice and I seemed not to be victims in this dream. Nevertheless I awoke suddenly, as if, at the final moment, I had made a great effort of my will, to avoid seeing the catastrophe : not that the sight of this peaceful cataclysm would have caused me actual terror ; for it was like the solemn accomplishment of some great undertaking, and I reproached myself for refusing to behold the conclusion. I tried to fall asleep again, so as to return to the staircase ; but I found there only the masons, who were engaged in rebuilding the demolished house, and in repairing, as they jovially remarked, the consequences of the termination of the world.

What is the cause of these fancies in sleep ? I shall be answered, One's physical condition. I grant it ; but that does not account for the different forms which they assume. This relates to an organic mechanism, with the machinery of which we are unacquainted, and which is an enigma to us all. As our eyes retain, for some time, the impression of the solar spectrum, so the mind is

filled with objects furnished by the eyes ; and fancy sketches them in a changed form, upon some camera-obscura, the sanctuary of dreams.

Our brain, then, is not an apparatus for photographic operations, by which exact likenesses are produced. *That* is more like a theatre where the performances of life are presented under the form of fictions ; but it is far richer and more original than any theatrical fiction. It is the unforeseen in all its power, the impossible accepted in advance, the unrestrained feast of the imagination. There the serious and the burlesque dance together, and fear and joy succeed each other. There grief is often poignant ; our tears flow, and moisten the pillow ; but it is laid aside most frequently, to give place to compensations impossible to be realized. The friend who has just left us returns suddenly after a long journey which has lasted but an instant. On certain occasions, even, he comes forth from the tomb where we have just laid him, to converse with us. We die very easily in our dreams ; and we feel ourselves dead and alive at the same time without surprise or distress. Thus, owing to the fictions which soothe our slumbers, we pass a considerable portion of our existence outside of the domain of reality.

We may dream without sleeping. Contemplation nearly always leads us to a higher state of existence, where reason lies dormant, and where our wanderings, though confined within stricter limits than those of the dream, are none the less exempt from the control of reason. There exists within us something called mind, which is perhaps entirely different from what at present bears this exceedingly vague and ill-defined name. I have thought for a long time that we possess three minds, — one for controlling the use of our organs, another for adjusting our relations with mankind, and a third for communion with the divine Spirit that animates the universe. Sainte-Beuve smiled when I told him so. “Three minds?” he exclaimed. “Would that we could be sure of having one!” I dared not answer him that we had, perhaps, more. We are not such simple phenomena as some have tried to believe, in order that they might class us as good and bad, elect and damned. On the contrary, we are very complicated structures; and the lobes of our brain have multifarious functions, which absolutely baffle scientific analysis. The scalpel of the metaphysician is no safer than that of the anatomist. Neither can touch the seat of life without destroying it.

Tamaris still, *May* 20, 1861. — To-day I did what is better for my delicate health than taking notes. I walked considerable, and I took a nap upon the grass. Notwithstanding the east wind, which is pretty strong, I started out with my coachman, the faithful Matron, who has become my careful attendant in my out-of-door exercise. He scolds me when I walk too much, or when I forget to eat my luncheon; but we have a companion whom he decidedly prefers to me, — one of his horses, his favorite one, which is called *Monsieur Botte*, God knows why. He is a little animal, full of spirit, and skilfully carries me through difficult ways. To-day Matron harnessed him, and undertook to have me taken to the top of Mount Evenos in a carriage; but, when we had reached the end of the road, he began to sigh, and I perceived that he was in great distress.

“What is the matter?” I asked. “Is M. Botte sick?”

“He is thirsty, *poor creature!*”

“Suppose we stop, and let him drink.”

“Oh, yes! I will run for some water. There are some woodmen over there, who must have brought their jug with them, and they will fill my pail; for sooner than make my horse drink the

water from that stream, which is nothing but black, dirty juice coming from the olive-presses, I would drink it myself."

The road did not seem to me very steep: so I told Matron that he might lead his horse wherever he liked, to water him, and that I would ascend on foot.

"No, no," replied he: "it would be too tiresome. I said that I would get you up in the carriage, and so I will. Look after M. Botte for a moment, until I return."

"Why look after him? He is steady enough. I prefer to stroll about in this little grove."

"But what if somebody should come to steal him? We are in the gorges of Ollionles, and out of the beaten track. I never feel exactly safe in a place like this."

"If any one should come to steal him, Matron, do you think me capable of defending him?"

"Oh! as far as that is concerned you need have no fear. There have been no brigands in the gorges since the time of Gaspard de Besse, who was captured, and buried in you know what grotto; at least, so they say in the country about here. But there are stragglers who, seeing a horse alone, would mount and make off with him;

yet they wouldn't dare to try it before a person's very eyes. So don't be afraid, but *take courage* for just a moment."

I did *take courage*; that is, I waited a full quarter of an hour. It was quite a pretty spot at the foot of the only wooded mountain of this barren chain. There was a fine turf, clean gravel, and interesting little flowers scattered here and there. I was not fatigued, but an unconquerable desire for sleep came over me; and, having assured myself that M. Botte was quietly browsing, I fell fast asleep. I believe that the horse was still browsing when Matron returned with the empty pail. He had not been able to find a drop of water, and he pretended that Botte cast reproachful glances at him.

"I have a mind to do the same," said I; "for I am very thirsty."

"Oh! you can get something to drink half way up the mountain; but, I warn you, it is quite a distance, and the *poor creature* can't walk fast. He is suffering in good earnest."

Our course was very simple,—to leave the carriage concealed amid the bushes, and all three mount on foot. I insisted upon adopting this course. The ascent did not appear very rugged,

and we made a short stay at the spring. This is an abundant stream of icy-cold water issuing from the sides of a heated mountain. Just here there is a deep depression in the mountain. The spring, overflowing the great stone basin which receives it, winds around the declivity, waters a charming park, and flows across the sloping prairies which carry off the water in an opposite direction to the gorges of Ollionles. I have seldom seen a villa so strangely situated as that to which this park belonged ; for Evenos is in the form of a sugar-loaf, and one would hardly expect to find water here, consequently shade and coolness. This habitation, far from being affected by the storms that rage about it, or burned by the scorching rays of a hot sun, is, as it were, an oasis protected by fine trees and refreshed by running water. A profound silence reigned here ; and through the openings in the foliage I caught glimpses of the dramatic and desolate scenery of the gorges, with their great perpendicular fissures, their jagged summits perforated, and supported by mighty piers, which, if not closely examined, would appear from a distance like giant fortresses built by the hand of man, or hewn out of the rock.

My surprise was increased when I left this park, to continue the ascent. This volcanic cone is planted in the midst of a calcareous chain. I had observed from below that the summit had the appearance of a crater: as I walked upon the lava, I could no longer feel a doubt. The ascent is everywhere practicable, by taking a zigzag course; and loaded wagons are constantly passing between the gorge and the summit. The village, or rather the town,—for it is an ancient fortified town,—is surmounted by an old ruined castle, from which the view is magnificent. The rampart is full of white immortelles. The carriages that pass along the Ollionles road are barely distinguishable from here with the naked eye, and yet it is directly under foot.

The descent is easy and rapid. As Matron was harnessing his horse in the little grove, he lamented that I had not gone up in the carriage; but M. Botte had had a good drink at the spring, and been well fed at the tavern: so I had to persuade his master, for his consolation, that we had pursued the necessary course.

On returning home, and thinking the matter over this evening, I am convinced that the coast

of Toulon is the most beautiful of all Provence. It presents an inexhaustible variety; and but for the mistral, which is exceedingly harsh, the environs of Toulon might be chosen for a winter residence.

But I must confine myself to the most prominent beauties, and not waste time with intermediate details. From the fortress of Evenos I could see not only the romantic gorges of Ollionles, but the whole extent of country separating them from the Mediterranean; and this brilliant panorama reminds one of the Promised Land. The splendor vanishes when we come in actual contact with the unfruitful soil, sickly orange-trees, stunted cork-trees, barren tracts either dusty or swampy, the infectious faubourgs, and the naked, slimy shore. It is all disagreeable when close at hand, and, were it not for botanical specimens, would give one the blues; but in the great panorama these details are set off by the purple of evening, or the adjustment of proportions. A harmonious effect is produced, which seems to me not unlike that produced in our general estimations by wisdom. Life may be likened to the earth upon which we tread. What is constantly within our

reach is full of deceit; what Reason erects at a distance receives its true value; and in the union of the two lies power. There is no use in denying it: every thing must be so arranged as to produce a fine effect when viewed as a whole.

CHAPTER X.

SOME IDEAS OF A SCHOOL-TEACHER.

NOHANT, January, 1872.

THE school-teacher is myself. I have, perhaps, a claim to this title, as I have almost always had one scholar or another to instruct. Sometimes it has been a child of my own, or one belonging to the family ; sometimes a servant, male or female ; sometimes a peasant, old or young, who, actuated by an unusual desire for learning, has asked me to teach him to read. So I have had my little experience, as well as other people ; and perhaps a short account of it might be of use to some one in a similar position.

As soon as the child can speak, teach him to read ; and, however delicate he may be, do not be afraid of wearying him, if you go the right way to work.

He will learn with more or less facility, according as he possesses an idea of form. Try to cultivate this power of discrimination by frequently

calling his attention to surrounding objects. Every child notices them in one way or another. Some will ask for the moon, while others will early understand that no arm is long enough to reach even the ceiling. If this notion of distances is slow in forming, try to promote its development. By his idea of dimensions, lead him to compare a large tree with a little plant; make him observe the tall, slender poplar, the bushy chestnut-tree, the round orange and apple, the rose round and thick, the periwinkle round and flat, the daisy round too, but dentated. If you have your watch in your pocket, explain to him its perfectly circular form by means of a piece of money a little smaller; by a handkerchief describe a square; by a domino, an oblong; by the gable of a roof, a triangle; by a stick, a straight line; and, by a hoop, a circle. It is not necessary for the child to learn, like a lesson, the technical terms for designating these forms: it is sufficient that he perceive the difference.

To generalize as much as possible the observation of tendencies, I would advise that children be divided into two classes, — those who are observing, and those who are not observing. The former early become skilful in the use of their hands and

bodies : the latter seem to have no idea of danger, and are always hurting themselves. The former use their reason early, and are quick to learn : the latter acquire knowledge more slowly, sometimes considerably so. Help them to obviate this natural difficulty by forcing them — without their being aware of it — to see and to observe. Put into the hands of the absent-minded or indifferent child such toys as will interest him by their form. Induce him to raise his head, to look about him, above and below ; not to remain a stranger to the external world, not to spend his life in the dreams and fictions of play, but to realize that there are other things than those which he can handle, and that some of these are similar in shape.

Peasants, strange to say, are very unobserving. One would suppose that their senses, being in continual contact with objects in nature, would be well developed ; but it is exactly the reverse, especially in those countries which are not very hilly. They often form a poetical conception of the whole ; but any detail which is not a matter of personal interest to them escapes their notice. From being ignorant of causes, they disdain them, and become incapable of perceiving them even when these causes produce very striking

effects. This is why it has been possible to keep them in a state of superstition, and teach them to be satisfied with ridiculous explanations. The letter of religion has kept them children, and their physical organization has suffered from the effect.

So it is very difficult for them to learn to read. Let us interest ourselves for them as for our own children, and try to alleviate their difficulty. The child subjected to such discipline as I have mentioned will feel a desire to trace figures himself, with a stick upon the gravel, with a piece of charcoal upon walls, or with a pencil upon paper. Furnish him with the means of gratifying this desire; or, if it do not exist, stimulate him to it by example. Let him draw lines in every variety: very soon he will learn to form *O*, which is the favorite letter of little children. Some are more inclined to produce shapes than to observe them, and learn to read more easily after knowing how to write; but the greater part need to be well acquainted with signs before being able to reproduce them. It is well, also, to allow them to draw imaginary figures. They will always make straight lines or circles, and these are the foundation of all signs used in reading and writing.

The varied combinations of these forms are, to one of medium intellect, a source of considerable difficulty. I am always astonished to see a child, or even an adult, learn the alphabet. The ear retains the sound more easily than the eye retains the form. Many pupils can recite their alphabet, and yet do not know the different letters when out of the regular order.

Learning should be rendered easy; not to spare the pupil the exertion of study, which is a healthful exercise and one without a substitute, but to accustom him to follow a simple and systematic course. It is the want of this system which has for so long rendered rudimentary education diffuse and slow of progress. Formerly years were spent on what can now be learned in a few months. There have been improvements in method, and there is room for still greater improvement; but no method is good for any thing if we are unable to master the will of the pupil.

I suppose that all adults would make as great an effort as lies within their power; but the child who has a great desire for learning is an exception. This would not be the case if childhood were well prepared for instruction by a system of moral and physical education.

The method which I practised with my grandchildren is certainly better than that which I used for my own children. With the latter I employed the ordinary means, incessant little struggles which make the pupils suffer and the parent's heart bleed. After more reasoning and a longer experience, I have acquired what I did not then possess,—a systematic patience under every trial.

This is the starting-point. Suppress the least show of impatience. Let the child never see in your countenance, or hear in the tone of your voice, the slightest change. If he be what is denominated *wild*, he can be controlled only by uniform calmness. If he be mild and timid, this calmness will give him the confidence that he lacks. With this appearance of calmness and good-nature, you can assert your authority without hurting his feelings, without arousing that instinct of revolt or inert resistance which forms a part of the uncultivated mind. Avoid the irritation of your nerves as you would a contagious disease of which the child would be in imminent danger. Not only do not strike him, but never raise your voice. Use neither hasty words nor gestures: do as you would to tame a bird. The

child is a little savage, who must be civilized without his being aware of the fact. Do not try to explain the necessity of education until he has derived some benefit from it; for if, when he remonstrates, you begin to reason with him, he will bring forth arguments of his own to oppose yours, and you will not have the advantage of the last word. Skilfully avoid disputes of every kind. This will perhaps be more difficult in the case of an intelligent child than in that of a pupil of medium capacity. The former will be as skilful in promoting a disturbance as you in quelling it. Postpone till the next day such questions as involve any disagreement. Finally, if you are of a nervous, excitable nature, and cannot control your feelings, send the child away. You would not bring him up well, and one of two things would result: either you would exasperate his temper, or break his spirit, one of which is as dangerous as the other.

Before undertaking the education of a child, then, we should consider our own education; for we are entering upon an apostleship of which we ought to render ourselves worthy. We must possess a little magnetic virtue; for the child's feelings are acted upon more easily than his

intellect. If he finds that you are the calmest, most indulgent, and most persevering person with whom he is concerned, he will seek you from preference; and, in the long-run, it will be you who will be most successful in his education.

I say *in the long-run*; for childhood has its intervals of enthusiasm and languor, and cannot always bestow that attention which you claim. Elementary instruction should be given in very small doses. It is cruel as well as dangerous, to encourage, through vanity, precociousness of perception. A time will come when the pupil succumbs physically or morally. If, at any time, you require too much of his memory or his will, a feeling of disgust will be the consequence, and you will be punished for an hour's unreasonableness by an alternation of indifference and resistance.

Notwithstanding all the care that I have suggested, there will very frequently be silent struggles, unmanifested resistance, and singular whims; for the child is superlatively whimsical. One day he complies with every thing: another, he will do nothing without arguing. He feels the need of a little comedy, and he feigns to have lost his memory. Sometimes he wants a different style

of drama ; and, if he succeed in making you lose your patience, he is either satisfied or angry, perhaps both ; but this is emotion, and, in reality, he is no more unreasonable than we sometimes are ourselves, when we prefer painful and dangerous excitement to dull resignation.

Watch the child, and, as soon as you observe a spirit of opposition, turn his thoughts in some other direction. If necessary, end the lesson, without allowing him to perceive the true cause. Pretend that it is on your own account, that you have some business that needs attention, a letter to write, or that you do not feel well. He will be very glad to be dismissed, but will return, of his own accord, to his lesson the next day.

Do not encourage the young to feel proud of their intelligence. You will thus aid in the excessive formation of a feeling which has heretofore been latent ; but which, developed too early, will be turned to a bad use. The next day he will employ, as a means of resistance, that pride which you sought to inculcate the previous day, for the purpose of insuring his obedience. Do not forget that he is a free being, and that he is not yet sensible of the bounds of his liberty. It is therefore very imprudent to bestow upon him

too frequent praise or blame, according as he behaves well or ill. Sometimes these alternatives of demeanor are involuntary ; but, at other times, attempts at revolt are made merely to disconcert the teacher. In such cases, be on your guard. If the lesson has been well recited, applaud only the effort and the reason of the child : take a moderate satisfaction in the fact of its being easy, whether so or not. If the lesson has been poorly recited, say nothing ; and, if it has been intentionally miserable, do not appear to suspect that this was done on purpose. The child is artless, even in his acts of greatest malice. Sometimes, astonished at your silence, he says to you, "I recited my lesson very badly." Do not trouble yourself to answer him that it was not intentional. He will leave in surprise, sly or confused, according to his nature, but convinced of one thing, that his attempt has failed. It is seldom, too, that a poor lesson is not succeeded by several very good ones. The pupil has learned for himself that he could not make you give up teaching him.

Let us consider, however, exceptional cases, in which the child's passion for blind resistance forces you to resort to harsh treatment, or to yield. There are such natures, not wicked, but

despotic, that would be driven to excess by an exercise of your own despotism. Do not hesitate: yield, but do not let it become apparent. Attribute the resistance of the child to some ailment on his part (you may not be mistaken), and postpone the lessons for a time. During this interval, observe him attentively, and very quietly repair the foundation of his moral education. Heal the soul before trying to cultivate the mind.

Do away with all kinds of deprivations and punishments. These only serve to destroy the idea of duty, which is the most difficult idea to introduce into a child's head. It must slip in by habit, before it is planted there by reason. Until the age of eight or ten, the pupil ought to receive this simple answer to his everlasting "Why?" "You are obliged to learn, and I am obliged to teach you." — "Who obliges us to do it?" — "Everybody in heaven and on earth." — "I don't see how." — "You are too young to see it now, but you will by and by."

Do not scruple to answer him by mysterious oracles. If you are careful to tell the strict truth through this oracle, you will never regret afterwards having given it to him under a veil. We are inclined to be premature in explanations.

Children are made to yield much more easily by a cautious answer than by argument.

“Alas!” you will exclaim. “This is not the way children are brought up.”

“Alas!” I shall reply. “We have never known how. Let us learn.”

I have said that we ought not to stimulate the intelligence of the child by praise; but do not be sparing in approbation and encouragement of his *efforts*. All human merit lies in the everlasting desire to learn: vain satisfaction with what we know puts a stop to real knowledge. We must continue to learn all our lives; and we should not conceal this fact from the child. Give him this idea of himself: that he will be nothing, if he knows nothing; that he will be a little better for knowing something; but that, if he knows a great deal, he will still be far from knowing enough. Do not take from him the pride of conscience; it is the one good thing: but preserve him from the pride of capacity. If he shows signs of a tardy intellect, do not allow it to be a source of mortification to him: if you do, he will become accustomed to it, and submit, without shame, to a sort of degradation; or perhaps, roused from his torpor by wounded self-love, he

will earnestly seek the gratifications arising from self-love. Conscience will take no part in his efforts to attain this end.

Accustom the child, even when very young (three or four years of age), to the regular performance of some slight daily task. If you cannot perceive that he is making any progress, be neither surprised nor uneasy : do not seek for undue stimulants ; but wait. It will all work right in time. Certain natures have their time of necessary incubation, but obtain a better knowledge of what they have been slow in learning. Others have intervals of physical languor, the external symptoms of which are scarcely perceptible, but during which the exertion of bodily development has a direct influence upon the mind. If there be suffering, suspend labor : if not, continue it ; but do not insist on the result being fruitful and apparent. Except for very important reasons, we ought not to allow the brain to go to waste, or interrupt the habit of exertion, however slight or imperceptible.

I cannot too often repeat that we are always too busy to give sufficient attention to this elementary education so important, which is the key to our whole moral and intellectual future. Let

us bestow upon it our careful thought. All the future studies of the child will bear marks of the intuition, logic, and perseverance which you have implanted in his mind in the days of its early training. I favor a method of very rapid reading; not exactly because it is rapid, but because it is clear and intelligible, because it accomplishes more without requiring any extra exertion; but no method is an infallible panacea. There are brains that cannot be perceptibly hurried; and there is one thing that I would impress upon my readers, — that time makes no difference in this matter. I often see, in families, very imprudent prejudices. We are too apt to pass judgment on children, analyze them, and criticise them, as we would men. We classify them, and sometimes make use of them as proof against or in favor of certain established systems. This analysis, when made in their presence, is fatal.

The child understands and takes advantage of the character attributed to him. If it be bad, he turns this to his own profit and amusement. He is a decided fatalist, and says of his own accord, to account for his peculiarities, “That is my way.” Even if you have the prudence to avoid explaining his disposition in his presence, do not allow

yourself to rely too much on your own explanation. You have not the power, much less the right, to establish the limit where Nature shall cease her operations in the human being. I have an aversion to methodical classifications of instinct and character. They can never be definitive, even in the case of adults; much less in the case of these malleable beings upon whom we experiment. Man is a far more complicated product than we imagine. Situated as he is between two opposing forces, nature and civilization, he must assume a multitude of forms before his completion; but his transformations are so rapid that the eye cannot always keep pace with them. The judgment of your pedagogism, which was correct in the morning, may be wrong before night. You are superintending the mysterious operations of an alembic. Do not pass judgment until you have given it a fair test.

The foregoing is to impress upon my readers the necessity of absolute patience and uniform good-nature. If kindness of heart does not prompt these feelings, Reason ought to suggest them. Consult her, and she will counsel you to be just; and indulgence is a form of justice decidedly necessary for childhood. Without patience, nothing will avail.

I do not approve of making the child find out for himself the letter, syllable, or word, at which he hesitates. I prefer to prompt him every time, without suffering him to observe that he has encountered a difficulty. I prevent all exertion, so as to secure his attention; which would be impossible, if I allowed the young brain to become fatigued. The child does not complain of being tired, because he does not know it: you must manage that he shall not be tired. After you have prompted him several times, he will try to utter quickly what has before puzzled him, so that he may say it before you. By using this extreme care with the fragile brain that you wish to develop, you may commence very early: otherwise, commence late; for, although there are many disadvantages in so doing, it is preferable to a premature and forced education.

Do not furnish children with primers and spelling-books indiscriminately. Many that are in common use contain exercises which, if the pupil does not understand them, are infinitely tiresome, and, if he is unfortunate enough to understand them, intensely foolish. By my method I require merely a collection of sentences of elementary simplicity: such as, "The rose

smells sweet ;” “ The bird sings ;” “ The sky is blue ;” “ The moon is round ; “ The sun is red ;” “ The stars are bright,” &c., — every thing that is connected with the child’s daily life.

Sancta simplicitas! But I am not going to enter into a detailed criticism, which would put me out of temper, as well as provoke censure. I shall content myself with discussing two general tendencies, opposed to each other, but leading to the same result. Religious realism and materialistic realism are the tendencies; fanaticism and plunder, the means; tyranny, the final end. Whether this come from above, or below, the result is always deterioration.

I do not like to have the child carelessly informed of the horrors of life, the wickedness of men, the deformity of objects, mortal hatreds, blood spilt by man, the torments of hell, and the anger of God, as if they were quite simple affairs, against which we must harden our feelings. We cannot keep from him the sight of evil or the terror of disasters. The rich may, to a certain extent, preserve their young family from such surroundings: the poor cannot. Teach him, then, to detest the evil which he sees. Do not encourage him in fatal indifference, or in so-called

stoicism, philosophic or religious, which seems to say, "Such things are: it is the part of wisdom to make the best of it." I would that it were possible for the child to grow up without the knowledge of evil; but such a thing is not to be thought of. Sin is universal. There is not such a thing as a peaceful existence. There is nothing to be done but to teach him to love the good and beautiful, and cultivate within him the holy flower of hope.

Some say that the child has a taste for destruction. This is generally true, especially as regards boys. Oppose this savage instinct: prevent it from degenerating into cruelty. If you wish him to be a true Christian, never mention to him the punishments of hell. If you wish him to be a true man, cultivate in him a love for his fellow-creatures. Therefore do not tell him that man is of no value, that he is incapable of improvement, and that he can be corrected only through severe treatment; or, that the future is either absolute nonentity or everlasting punishment. Do not *bronze* him with fear, which gives rise to egotism, nor with indifference, which sanctions it. Defer, as long as possible, giving him an explanation of murder; and if, as has recently happened when

the entire population was in the midst of disasters, it has been impossible to keep him from frightful spectacles and heart-rending separations, avail yourself of the first momentary lull, to distract his attention, and drive these scenes from his memory. There is an age when the mind must forget or perish. For this, Nature has made provision. The child forgets easily : give him your help. Do not recall, in his presence, catastrophes which he has seen ; and, if it has been possible to prevent him from witnessing them, do not mention them at all.

I am often told that I wrap their minds in too much cotton. Are we not taught this by Nature, which implants in the mother an instinct for preserving the most fragile beings, by means of the utmost caution ? Is not the young bird kept in the softest of down until its wings have grown ? The wings of the mind will make their appearance in due time ; and your assistance will then be needed in its first attempts at flight.

For example : as soon as the child is able to read and write, he will feel the need of a knowledge of things about him, — the earth, and the operations of nature. I should commence by geology, the history of the soil, and treat, in turn,

of the first manifestations of life, its successive changes, its recovery of possessions, mysterious successions, and multifarious links. Thus we have the history of the ground, and geography will be the crowning point.

The study of language, an art, or a trade, would require two or three years, at the end of which time we should have reached an age when, our morals being established, we might learn with impunity the history of the human race, and the crimes, follies, and misfortunes which assist in its formation ; we should then be capable of forming a just judgment of this terrible question of good and evil. Until this time, teach the child to understand and love what is good, by a continual inspiration of good example and sweet habits of mutual affection. If you cannot surround the child with domestic harmony, uprightness, and good-nature, it may not always be your fault : only do not be astonished that his disposition grows sour, and that the light flickers in his disturbed and corrupted mind. Prematurely ripe, the fruit which you are cultivating will preserve the bruises ; and these will result in disease, or, if nothing worse, in scars.

I have been told, also, “ What you desire for

the child is an impossibility. His life is so intimately connected with that of adults, that he will necessarily meet with trials, and must learn to bear them with submission." Am I not aware of this? All that I ask is, that you frame an ideal of education, and conform to it as closely as possible; and that, taking advantage of early youth,—that time so evanescent, during which the child belongs more to you than to the external world,—you devote your attention to the development of his mind, without injury to his body. Very soon he will need armor, to fight the battle of life. Of what use will it be, if the wasted combatant is not strong enough to wear it?

But the school-teacher is taking a liberty, and talking too much philosophy. Let us return to elementary studies, where alone she feels at home; for, though having obeyed an ideal, she has still felt the great necessity of observation and experience. Contrary to a widely felt prejudice, she believes that writing should be taught almost at the same time as reading.

Writing is the necessary complement of the ideas of orthography which the pupil obtains by reading. He will learn that many words contain letters that are not pronounced; but he must not

feel, on that account, that they do not exist, and that he may pass over them without notice. Make him write fast. This is like learning a new alphabet; but he has already been trained in the idea and observation of forms. Do not weary him with strokes and pot-hooks for more than a day or two. You cannot expect him to write a fine hand at the outset. His small hand if he is a child, his awkward one if he is an adult, and his nervous system, not trained, like ours, to self-possession, will prevent him, for a long time, from producing a brilliant calligraphy. Put a pencil into his hands, and let him practise by forming characters, however imperfect, in imitation of a written page. Merely require that the intended words be in a line, and the letters connected. When he commences to use his hand with a little more freedom, give him some advice as to seating himself comfortably, neither too high nor too low: every thing depends upon this. Attend to the position of his body. The paper should be placed directly in front of him, and his right elbow should not be confined to his body, or rest upon the table. Study his conformation, and do not commence with him until you are sure of not correcting it too suddenly if it be defective, or making it

crooked if it be regular. Do not allow him to write or read every day in the same place. Let the light shine sometimes on the right, sometimes on the left, sometimes behind, and sometimes in front. You probably know the necessity of this mode of treatment when he is asleep, in order that his eyesight, his brain, and his whole body do not develop more fully on one side than on the other, which is very frequently the case during the period of growth.

When you have scrupulously taken every precaution, give him several printed models in different styles of writing, and let him copy the one which he thinks easiest. Try to prevent all exertion, and do not require him to slant his letters from right to left. As we write our lines from left to right, it is easier and more natural to incline the letters in that direction; and experience teaches us that this is the more rapid and less fatiguing style, since, instead of pressing the arm close to the side, it leaves it free; nor does it cause the shoulder to droop, which position, after a while, becomes cruelly fatiguing to the muscles. I am convinced that, in many cases, the liver, becoming compressed by the elbow in its attempts to slant the letters, receives injuries of which the

cause remains unknown. To avoid twisting the body, many persons whose writing inclines very much from right to left incline their paper in the same direction, thus accustoming themselves to look at the slanting characters which they are forming, in a sort of cross-light which is very hurtful to the eyesight.

The body should be erect, the paper should be placed straight and in front of the writer, and the letters should be vertical and round. This is the most legible, the most rapid, the least fatiguing, and the best method.

Do not confine your pupil to any particular style. Calligraphic signs admit of much variety. Require him to join his letters, and write each word without interruption. If he succeed in doing this with ease, and without having any letter deformed, if he can write a perfectly legible hand without any fatigue, he understands writing better than the majority of adults.

Confine him to the use of a pencil for a long time, as this glides more easily than a pen. As soon as he becomes familiar with the simple and easy formation of all the letters, let him read a short phrase ; and, after he has examined it attentively, close the book, and request him to write

the words. He will then become familiar with orthography, which every one does not know on leaving college, and of which it would be well to possess a slight knowledge before entering.

I have finished. You, people with good intentions, but slaves of habit, will not listen to me; still less, you who take no interest in the good or bad management of children; but, if I have persuaded a dozen good and wise mothers of families, my time and my trouble will not have been spent in vain.

Patience and good temper, above every thing, brave hearts! *Govern without causing tears*, and you will have achieved something grander and more difficult than all the romances of your servant and friend,

GEORGE SAND.

CHAPTER XI.

THE POETS OF TO-DAY.

TO CHARLES EDMOND.

SAINTE-BEUVE has said somewhere, that, after having read and digested the feverish verses of modern poetry, he liked to read once more "Petrarch's most crystalline sonnets." It was about thirty years ago that he wrote that. The poets of to-day have made an entire change: properly speaking, they are neither classical nor romantic. They are painters. Initiated into the secrets of the studio, they have learned to see Nature in all her details; and when they describe her it is with a richness of epithet which is like a graduated scale of the finest and freshest shades. This new school is a progression, like every idea that is thoroughly investigated; but it has one defect,—obscurity. By an equal distribution of light, it exaggerates the relief of the details to the detriment of the principal effect. Certain strophes are so polished and touched up, to

prevent any appearance of vulgarity, that they require to be read three times before they can be fully understood; and I must acknowledge that a few have baffled my powers of interpretation. Classic poetry was too musical. It sacrificed energy of thought to rhythm and sonorousness. This was both its merit and its defect, as the *picturesque* is to-day the merit and defect of young poets. The ancient poets styled themselves *children of the lyre*: those of the present time might be called children of the brush or the palette.

They certainly took a step towards progress, when they ceased imitating Victor Hugo, and turned their attention elsewhere. They cannot, perhaps, do better; but they will succeed in becoming natural, and not imagine themselves masters through a borrowed style, but become so in reality, by means exclusively their own.

Victor Hugo is inimitable, especially now that he has become, as we may say, the classic type of romanticism. "L'Année Terrible" is perhaps his best work. This book has not yet been justly estimated, and will not be in our present state of undue excitement. It is fearfully natural, and wonderfully graphic. The public looks into it

for political emotions; for every page utters an appeal for immediate action. Yet this is not what the critic ought to seek. His judgment should be entirely of a literary nature; for the poet's point of view is his existence, his life, and no one has the right to ask him, "Why do you exist?"

The life of this great poet is an antithesis. With his eagle eyes he gazes to the right and left, above and below, but not always before him, because he soars aloft, describing great circles, without troubling himself about any fixed course. There is no course marked out for him who lives in space illimitable, and soars on indefatigable wings. Shall we quarrel with him because he does not understand certain men, and has an imperfect perception of certain things? This would be an idle quarrel, and of serious inconvenience to ourselves; for, by combating with what seems to us erroneous in some of his estimations, we should be overlooking the infinite truth and strength of his perception as a whole.

The poet, and especially the poet raised to such eminence, is not obliged, like us, to be on the watch for danger. He would not suffer from collision with any unforeseen obstacle, but, like

Antocus, rise from the shock. The harm is in trying to convert him into a *politician*. Even though he were willing to submit to this condescension, to attempt discussion, to brave ridicule, to coldly repulse injustice, the thing would be impossible: he is too passionate. He needs the thunder, to avenge personal affront; and nothing but thunder will suffice. When he tries to become dogmatic, he is no longer himself. He can handle only the boundless: this is his privilege, his right, since therein lies his strength, since his grandeur consists in passing by every goal whatsoever, and since, if we insisted on that practical wisdom employed in transitory affairs, we should have no Victor Hugo. This would be depriving France of her crown. Has she not already suffered enough? She still retains one sublime poet, one unfettered mind, one man who looks beyond the horizon, and who, without regard to what others call impediments, proclaims the law of centuries to come; and shall we bid him be silent? This might be the act of an assembly terrified by the frightful tumult: it could not be that of a clear conscience.

Our sons will read *L'Année Terrible*; but, after having read of it in history, they may not under-

stand it. They will appreciate the work of the poet, and will point to the causes and effects which were deprived of their necessary correctives, no longer necessary to our sons, because they will have enfranchised all that now keep us under restraint. In these grand descriptions of suffering, which the great poet alone can approach without reserve, they will behold the immediate causes of fatal effects. They will seem to hear the desperate cry of expiring France; and from this reverberating cry will, perhaps, be dated its return to life.

It is not talent alone that constitutes the magic power of this poet. His style is, perhaps, not always irreproachable. Repetitions occur, and passages which rely unskilfully and unscrupulously on the waves of inspiration. His style contains, too, a little ancient monotony, which, never being able to turn into vacuity, turns sometimes into the mournful, like a bas-relief fastened to the *De Profundis* of a cathedral. However disconsolate the subject, we always like to find some life there, even in death; because the breath of the poet is life itself, always triumphing over nihilism. But there are passages upon which we cannot dwell, so quickly are our minds borne

aloft. Others, if less powerful, would perhaps be more skilful ; for verse is nowadays carried to a wonderful degree of adroitness ; but the true power of emotion is that which increases as it is prolonged, like a protracted peal of thunder, interrupted though never exhausted by repeated reverberations. So, in subjects of a different nature, this regular and equally astonishing progression of *serenity* may be likened to a sunrise, in which the light finally becomes so intense as to dazzle every one. This is that extraordinary gift, unrivalled personality. This power precludes neither tenderness nor grace. The lion exhibits the coquettish ways of the bird, a maternal tenderness for children, and outpourings of the heart, which call forth tears. The verses to "Little Jeanne," and to "The Sick Child," will ever remain pure pearls in that magic casket which contains, like those in Oriental legends, sunbeams, clouds, and tempests.

I have lately been reading other poets. Although I have no right to form here a literary *salon* (besides, it is not in my line), there is one person whom I should like to mention next to Hugo, because — It happened one evening among a few choice friends. Paul de Saint-

Victor had just been reciting in an admirable tone of voice, and with an irresistible accent, *Le Vieux Capitaine*. Bouilhet was requested to recite *La Colombe*, which commences his book of posthumous poetry.

“After Victor Hugo!” he said, smiling.
“Oh! never.”

This modesty entitled him, in my opinion, to a higher estimation by us than by himself. There is no occasion for ranking any particular person first, second, or third after the master; because, without controversy, the latter will always stand at the head of the illustrious *cortège*; but I give Bouilhet his rank, as chance has thrown into my hands that volume from beyond the tomb, carefully edited by his faithful friend Gustave Flaubert. Bouilhet belongs, I believe, to the picturesque, very learned, and rather choice school, of which I spoke at the commencement of this chapter; but he possesses the merit of a vivid clearness, which interferes in no way with distinction of style, and elevation of thought. He has grace, enthusiasm, imagination. He tasked his Muse. In his latter years he became master of her, and wrote without apparent effort. He seemed to improvise, which is, in my opinion, the

grand expression of talent. In an entertainment given at the Odéon in honor of his memory, the day after his death, the literati of Paris listened to a selection of exquisite pieces recited by some of the greatest artists. Madame Plessy's rendering of *La Berceuse Philosophique* is still remembered:—

“Monsieur, l'enfant qu'on attendait,
Soyez le bienvenu sur terre!”

This is a *chef-d'œuvre*; and there are more than one in this volume so sadly named *Dernières Chansons*. One of these, to which I give the preference, is entitled *Sombre Eglogue*:—

LE VOYAGEUR.

L'ombre sans lune a couvert la campagne.
Où t'en vas-tu, pâtre silencieux?

LE PÂTRE.

O voyageur, le souci m'accompagne,
Et quand tout dort, je marche sous les cieux, &c.

I have been fortunate again in finding time to read Æschylus, translated by M. Leconte de Lisle. The latter is himself a great poet, and possesses such decided originality that he has become the founder of a school. We owe him a sincere debt of gratitude—and this debt is a

national one — for continuing, in the midst of the tragic events of these later times, his severe task, and furnishing us with a true idea of the father of tragedy. M. Leconte de Lisle has already given us Homer. He alone, I think, could faithfully portray the grand simplicity of these ancient styles without marring their beauty. His has been, apparently, the patient, thankless toil of him who washes gold for the benefit of others; but who could be a better judge of pure gold than he who bears within him a fruitful mine?

You have given me a work to read from *Æschylus*, which, be it said without offence, shows a wonderful appreciation of the author: so I associate you with the glory due the earnest worker who has made us acquainted with this warbler.

Literary minds have, at the present time, a clearly apparent mission. It is for them to support our only remaining standard, the intellectual superiority of France. Whilst we possess the first poets, the finest painters, and the greatest musicians, we can protest against that decline with which we are threatened. Through the vivid power of genius and talent, by the eternal vitality of our Latin race, we may take our revenge.

Taste is our acknowledged speciality. Those who are dull of appreciation strive to regard it as a useless gift, when in reality it is the true source of fruitful *selections* in the moral order. Without poetry in literature, painting, and music, in sculpture and architecture, even in those industrial pursuits which are so closely allied to the arts, no people can hope for a future. Those who should attempt to dispense with it would see their material force rapidly weaken, and become exhausted. Poetry is the ardor of sentiment, something innate, alternating from restraint to discharge, river and brook, into the bed of talent. Taste is the literary floodgate, which distributes these salubrious waters, causing fertility and life. Without taste, we should have nothing but inundations, confusion, or disasters. Be proud of possessing taste: it is the great inventor, the divine equilibrium which nothing can disturb or destroy. What military campaign, however wisely conducted, can compare with the artistic campaign through which our painters have just passed at the late Exposition? Who expected to find the general progress so apparent, or to behold such a remarkable number of excellent and charming productions, just at the close of a

tempest which seemed to have swept away every thing? Messrs. Germans, who are so military; Messrs. Russians, who are so powerful; Messrs. Americans, who are so wealthy,—where are your pictures and your painters? Some of you have bought museums with money, others have collected them by plunder; but which of you is the indefatigable producer, the fruitful inventor? Our enemies have believed they could destroy us by cannon, and strip us of our money; but, as if by magic, we fill the market with a fresh harvest, sown and ripened beneath their volleys.

I was at Paris, a few days ago, in the bare and simple parlor of a great artist. Nothing, or almost nothing, relieved the emptiness of this apartment, — merely a piano and some chairs. In a little gallery adjoining was an organ with a sublime tone, played by a modern master, a few pictures from the ancient masters, and a marble bust of the great artist herself, a beautiful bust indeed. Upon the stairs were two large vases of wild flowers. The taste for these flowers has reached Paris. This is a mark of progress. Our rustic flora, which is so charming and so rich, is at last appreciated; very soon a thorough knowledge of it will be acquired. It is pre-eminently

a democratic luxury, a symbol of future equality, the portable garden of the rich and the poor, the mania of innocent plunder, which does the young cornfields so much good that the proprietors ought not to complain.

At the commencement of the evening, the youngest member of the family, a fine boy of fourteen years, accompanied on the piano by his illustrious mother, played the violin with that compass and that freedom of execution, that soundness and depth of feeling, which denote a pure and susceptible conscience, nourished in the school of truth. Afterwards two beautiful young girls, charming in their natural simplicity, delighted us with their clear voices, so nearly alike, and harmonizing so exquisitely, that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. Their mother, who is a fine pianist, accompanied them also. Then she sang a solo herself. I had not heard her for twenty years. She has attained the highest style, and possesses that conception of this great art which renders the interpreter worthy of the originator. She gave us Gluck, and was sublime. A feeling of emotion seized the audience, which was composed entirely of enthusiastic artists; and it seemed to me as though some

Grecian god passed through our smoking ruins. While listening, I had forgotten every thing, my melancholy feelings about conquered France, her devastated population and dishonored capital, the discords of the present, and the intrigues of the enemy for the future. When I returned home, it all came back to me; and I wondered how such horrible things could have been as far from my mind, for a few hours, as if they had never occurred. The sun of Gluck and Viardot had banished my frightful dream. What is this power of the beautiful, which lifts us from an ocean of dismal thoughts, and, like some blessed wave, casts us upon a Promised Land? Ah! let it take its flight, this hope, the only one that is genuine and eternal, bearing us from heartrending scenes, and rekindling within us the fire of enthusiasm, that noble outpouring of the mind towards every thing that is great.

NOHANT, July 12, 1872.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REVOLUTION FOR AN IDEAL.

SHALL we double the cape of tempests? Let us try to do so. I regard, as the means of success, perfect sincerity, and an impartial criticism on all occurrences, of whatever nature.

I am not fitted to accomplish so important a task. Confined, as I am, to a domestic life, to my occupations, and intimate social relations, to which I am drawn both by duty and the cravings of my nature, I have but a distant view of men and occurrences. This does not prevent me, however, from sometimes indulging in reflections, and forming an opinion upon the general issue of events.

If I should undertake to pass judgment on them, I should not now attempt to lay aside the opinion of any one, and offer my own as a dogma. The time has arrived when we must acknowledge the liberty of conscience to such an extent as not to regard as inimical the man who thinks differ-

ently from ourselves, unless we would keep up a fight with one another and perish.

Driven to the necessity of a mutual understanding, at whatever cost, our situation, and that of all who love their country, is not as bad as it might have been after such distressing calamities. It is even comparatively good ; but, if we ruin it, we shall be not only foolish, but criminal, criminal towards our country, the future, and our own children.

Is it impossible to demonstrate this to all, even to extreme parties ?

I will begin with the latter, because they are the least discerning in the face of danger.

I shall not, however, speak of that party formed from the *Commune*, because I see no formula in their acts or their speeches. All that has become manifest in the confusion of their aspirations is the image of chaos ; and, as chaos dwelt also in the opposite aspirations, they sought to make Paris a rendezvous for partisans at war with France. The truth is, that Paris was for a moment deceived as to the extent of the calamities to France, and began to suspect treason ; which suspicion was immediately and very unjustly cast upon those men who had been placed and maintained in power during

the siege. On seeing the attitude of the Assembly of Bordeaux, Paris was again mistaken in supposing that the majority had it in their power to restore the monarchy, and that M. Thiers joined in their cause. So Paris formed the *Commune*, believing this to be a power of service to the republic. Paris was republican, and was desperate. That is not belonging to a party: it is being a man and a patriot.

Paris was mistaken a third time in supposing that she could be saved from a monarchy by a party mainly formed from the "people." This party never really existed, since it was devoid of the slightest harmony, the least feeling of union, or any method whatever in the strange form of government which it assumed. It displayed all sorts of attempts, of fancies, and of pretensions to social science; but at foundation there was nothing but passions, dreams, or longings. Ambition, ignorance, and vanity ruled, each pulling its own way; the bad unmindful of all save themselves, the good incapable of organizing disorder, and the worthless foolishly infatuated with their momentary importance. There can be no party where there is no common principle; and to attempt to seize, by main force, what does not

belong to us, before establishing our right to possess it, is not a principle in any country in the world. The *Commune*, then, sinks into the domain of material doings, and is not to be discussed; which does not mean that the people have no right to the discussion of their own interests: this is quite another affair, and I shall not advert to it again except from necessity.

Putting the *Commune* out of the discussion, then, I would address myself to radicalism, and inquire if it is sufficiently versed in social and political science, to accept once more the immediate and exclusive government of affairs. It has just made a trial, which has proved disastrous. It could not save invaded France; it could not restrain the passions of the people. It was outflanked, betrayed, rendered powerless. It has tendered its resignation, but at the right time and place. This party (for this is a genuine one; it has its formula, and is no more lacking in men of ability than any other party) is strong in that it is the fraction of a more extensive party, which desires the republic, red or white, — emphatically desires it, and will have it. By the side of these formulated aspirations, place the lofty aspiration for liberty, which does not feel the need of a

formula, but may be identified under the form of a liberal party militant, and you will have a nation that desires to belong to herself, and not be dependent on any exclusive party.

Hence arises that tendency of the multitude, which, at times, are ready to support radicalism, to resist it at a given moment, or abandon it without excuse, for fear of some new tyranny. Radicalism has received so many and such severe lessons, that it should be careful to deserve no more. For this reason, it should take into consideration the age, and moral resistance. It should lay aside the revolutionary dream which consists in renewing, out of all reason, a glorious past, but not accepting its dark side. Without repudiating the vast power and great advantages of this party, it should have courage to break with certain traditions which are revolting to the conscience of the present day. In short, it ought to accept the forms of modern life, and struggle against constituting the antithesis of the clerical party, whose intolerance and passions it has but too well imitated.

It seems as though the radicals must have realized this necessity when, seeing the party losing its identity, they grouped around M. Thiers, the

expression of dominant liberalism. Their evolution must have been repugnant to every shade of socialism; nevertheless they acted very wisely, and I like to think that the majority displayed more patriotism than tactics in this evolution.

Let this party, and those allied to it, feel that their situation is far from being desperate. Radicalism will meet with certain triumph at the elections which will follow the decease of the actual assembly. Liberalism wishes for antagonists of the monarchy and of the Church. Now, as ever, it will require of candidates of the moment only the passion of the moment. If the radicals do not become too much elated by their victory, if they can give as good an account of what their electors *do not wish* as of what they really *do* wish, they will be able to do their country an immense service: if not, they will surrender her to the disturbances from which we are still suffering.

Facing radicalism, at the other extremity of the battle front, stands the Church, in a threatening attitude, and replete with worldly ambition. It, too, has ramifications extending throughout the universe, a formulated doctrine, enthusiastic orators, pretensions to power, and the sympathy of numerous adherents; but it, too, rests upon a sort

of religious liberalism, which does not join in the Catholic radicalism of its enterprises. It, too, owes its preponderance of power to a need of the moment, — that of peace at all hazards. Nor was every one actuated by cowardice in demanding peace at all hazards. The majority felt the impotence of radicalism, and saw disaster inevitable. They tried to confront radicalism, which pretended to go to the extent, with the Church, which desired, or seemed to desire, a compromise. Disgust at the present state of affairs, and fear of worse to come, led to this vote as in a year hence, perhaps, they will lead to the other extreme. Clerical influence, then, is spurious, or, at all events, very precarious; and its thirst for dominion would not be quenched, even if it possessed that influence in the assembly for which it is so ambitious. If it continues to attempt a restoration of the past, it will fall with a crash; while, with a more enlightened idea of the needs of modern life, it would last as it ought, and might derive advantage from those ideas of tolerance and liberty which are in the true spirit of general aspirations.

On the whole, many liberals, and even certain radicals, are Catholics. Catholicism is an indi-

vidual belief, and does not belong to any party. It is an outrage to a religion, it is like renouncing and destroying it, to convert it into a political means. Many Catholics have this feeling, — at present, the majority. I know of many who cling to the faith, yet are unwilling to be called clerical, because this political flag is prejudicial to their political opinions.

This is the case with the peasant, whose deposit at the ballot-box is so considerable. He wishes his mass and his religious festivals. He is opposed to the re-establishment of the Bourbons.

So religion will not take an active part in the coming electoral struggles; and I am inclined to think that the dissenters will not bestow upon it the slightest attention. The all-important business will be to repulse the efforts of a party whose principles of authority carried to excess are becoming a law of legislation. I do not anticipate any difficulty here, as the right and left central parties are destined to come to an understanding on neutral ground, whither they will be irresistibly impelled by liberalism.

The moderate element, which has stood the late terrible commotions, and which is the only vital and durable element of actual France, will be

forcibly confronted with the social question, will succeed in understanding it, and will work earnestly and usefully for its solution. All decrees of the present time are manifestly transitory: they are but the swell of the billows after a storm. If earnest minds can only refrain from fatal precipitance, individual manias, and blind ambition, France will effect, before she is ten years older, and without striking a blow, a mighty and magnificent revolution. Will this happen?

This revolution will not be what international relationship would call the triumph of democracy. No: the poor will not violently despoil the rich, the ignorant will not bear the responsibility of power, nor an illiterate class obtrude itself on a nation as arbiter of her destiny. Such is a wild and stupid dream. We do not propose another surprise favored by exceptional circumstances; and, if we did, it would be but another storm of a few days' duration. One contingency alone could give it a duration of years; that is, if the clerical party should attain to power. Oh! then what a frightful re-action would take place from one end of France to the other, for the restoration of liberty! and, as the vote of the majority is guided essentially by instinct, they would resort

to any means, even terror, for establishing this antithesis, security.

Has the clerical party such a thirst for martyrdom that it would drag France into the abyss with itself? Let us hope not, and let us seek to discover what will be the triumph of democracy when its time comes.

The human ideal, like the social ideal, is the attainment of equality; but first it is necessary to understand its nature, — to know in what it consists, and what are the rights that it sanctions, and the duties that it imposes. *Fraternity or death* was a beautiful device, when understood in its true sense; viz., *to fight to become men, or to die!* But when interpreted thus, *Be our brothers, or die by our hands!* it became absurd and abominable. Unfortunately, it is still taken in this sense by certain democratic schools; and in order to obliterate this notion, as an outrage to the human conscience, the entire people must attain to the knowledge of good and evil. Nor are they so far removed from this as one might suppose, after the late crisis. Without any doubt, a very small number of violent men were solely responsible for the excesses and crimes committed. As to the numerous champions of

the democratic idea, there was a mistaken notion of right, but by no means a denial of the law of conscience. The first step towards social equilibrium is gratuitous and liberal instruction. We shall probably have quite the reverse ; but let us wait for a while with resignation. The words *social equilibrium* have escaped my pen ; and I am inclined to use them instead of *social question*, because it is the equilibrium that determines the question.

- Is not equilibrium the secret of the universe, — the natural or divine law, by virtue of which we exist ? Are not all our violations of equilibrium checked by a compulsory return to that equilibrium, or else temporarily chastised by a temporary derangement of equilibrium ?

Social equality is nothing more nor less than the share of each in the social equilibrium ; and, if we seek for a law in natural equality, we shall find it nowhere but in the counterpoise of forces opposed to one another. There are, in this order of things, forces of weakness, docility, seduction, and suavity, which are as much realities as the forces of strength, encroachment, violence, and rudeness. This everlasting contest which the law of life is constantly undergoing upon the face of

the globe, man carries on in his thoughts, as well as his actions. Where he represents merely brutal force, he is little superior to the animals: where he represents intellectual and moral force, he has a right to believe himself the highest expression of the actually existing creation; but this on condition that he follow, with constancy, that tendency which is continually urging the universe towards a higher destiny.

Social equilibrium, then, consists in furnishing all with the means of developing their individual worth, of whatever nature, provided it be worth and not inertia. Ignorance is not the only obstacle: there is misery too,—that is, the want or excess of labor; and a society which could not find the means of equalizing the expenditure of strength and the legitimate acquisition of healthy enjoyments is a ruined society.

I do not think that the rich or the moderately wealthy class will not be obliged to make some great sacrifice in founding such a considerable establishment as is now in preparation; for this must be a legal establishment adapted to the intellectual emancipation of those classes wanting both in money and instruction. Gratuitous services will be requested, and this can never be

prevented without striking a blow at the liberty of transactions ; but, when transactions can be effected only at the expense of great collective struggles, there is something wrong in the social and industrial organization. What I have been earnestly desiring is taking place. A thorough investigation of the requirements of labor, and the resources of industry, has been commenced. The immediate result will not be very satisfactory. A permanent and fundamental institution is needed ; for requirements and resources are constantly undergoing modifications ; and when, after the lapse of fifteen or twenty years, it will become necessary to return to the question of actuality, we shall be startled and discouraged in view of the new examination to be made. This is postponed as long as possible, to avoid over-exciting the parties interested. The dissatisfied will get irritated, the satisfied become obstinate. The great study of social equilibrium should be uninterrupted, and rest only on relative solutions. This is what the true friends of the people ought to desire, and will desire.

When this great tribunal of social interests shall perform its regular functions, and its members be elected by patrons and workmen under

conditions of approved impartiality, whoever attempts to govern in any way, through intrigue or violence, will be worthy of condemnation. Thus far, human decisions have produced scenes at variance with conscience; as, when we see ignorance disarmed before wealth combined with knowledge and authority. Ignorance, not knowing its rights, resigns or exaggerates them; but, however deplorable a use it makes of them, we must not forget its entire existence.

Really fraternal institutions would prove the future salvation of the people. But there is one essential starting-point: this is the establishment which I have before mentioned, — the establishment for promoting means of realization. The time will come when every one will gladly contribute his share; but, if you wish to produce that holy equality of the people which is possible, this great subscription must not bear the character of a charity. We are not the equal of that man who throws us the offering of pity; for many give it with disdain, merely to avoid the sight of distress. The study of social science, which is not merely an economic capacity, but a philosophy, a religion without any miracles except those which man can perform, must fill us with a sense of our

duties ; it must impress upon us the right of all to liberty, instruction, and comfort ; it must teach us to become civilized men, capable of civilizing other men. We can raise five thousand millions of francs to restore and preserve our nationality. The time will come when we shall be able and willing to make a similar effort to preserve our conscience, and restore our dignity. Who knows what amount could be raised by an annual contribution for the abolishment of intellectual helotism ?

This would require the vote of a sovereign, republican assembly. It could not be accomplished by the will of a prince or a party, without producing a change in its character. Private initiative does not yet possess American vitality, and perhaps never will in France, although we must hope for it, and strive to encourage it. By the sincere fusion of the different parties, we may hope for this great movement, this immense and unprecedented loan, which, perhaps, will be called in history, "revolution for an ideal."

NOHANT, July 23, 1872.

CHAPTER XIII.

FATHER HYACINTHE.

SEPT. 12, 1872.

I MAKE no attempt to unravel the complicated difficulties of the present time, arising from the divergence, unexpectedness, or apparent strangeness of the multifarious events that are taking place. Possibly this is an epoch of general decomposition; but most certainly it is an epoch of simultaneous, partial recomposition. What is destroyed in one direction is reconstructed in another. Efforts for restoring the past, for building up the present, and erecting the future, are all active at the same time. The earth trembles, edifices crumble, others spring up from the depths of the unknown; and every person receives his own impression. Each one has a right to his own; but it is the duty of a few to make theirs manifest.

I feel that this duty rests upon me in regard to Hyacinthe-Loyson. Having been requested by

mutual friends to express my sentiments concerning him, I declined seeing him or making his acquaintance. I had my doubts in regard to his sincerity; at least, his frankness. There is a marked shade of difference between these two words: one may be ingenuous, and yet lack courage. It seemed to me that such was the case with this philosophic priest, who rejected the dogma of hell, favored the marriage of priests, condemned neither Jews nor heretics, and yet called himself Catholic, and submitted to the Roman Church.

M. Hyacinthe-Loyson has not changed, but I have altered my opinion. He denies papal infallibility, contends with the official church, and marries. I believe him both sincere (that is, ingenuous) and frank (that is, brave).

I am not laughing at his ingenuousness, I assure you. I am touched by his courage, and I admire it. I read the declaration which he published a few days ago, in the "*Temps*," and which was copied by all the newspapers. It appears to me the language of a worthy man, and a man of heart.

It constitutes a very wholesome and very fine page in the religious history of our times. The

rage which it has occasioned does not affect me. This vain roaring of an angry sea, this boiling and frothing, do not hinder me from seeing the new island rise to the surface, and the waves dash around it, powerless to effect its submersion.

It is now but a small tract of land, a narrow refuge, difficult of access, impossible of egress. This is an entirely new point of doctrine, as regards the position taken by the orthodoxy of our day. A little church is founded, which, in a century, will probably receive due consideration. Who knows but it may become some important halting-place, where Catholicism will, in its turn, take refuge in its struggle against death?

For its hour is approaching; and the pilgrimages, the use of grottos and marvellous waters, the political invasion of the sanctuary, — these are its funeral-knell. What does it signify that the ignorant or fanatic masses saunter along in the footsteps of the agitators?

When a religion can no longer satisfy a healthy soul, its fate is decided. Its existence is only a question of time.

But this religion, which, at its birth, was an ideal, a relative truth, cannot perish without emitting some still pure and brilliant gleams; and,

in the midst of the darkness into which the official Church is plunged, the declaration of M. Hyacinthe-Loyson is like one of those flashes of light which are emitted from lamps in which the fuel is nearly exhausted. Catholicism cannot and ought not to disappear suddenly. Its agony must have its day. Though hastened by the demonstrations of Lourdes and La Salette, its end will most certainly be delayed by generous attempts, and truly religious exertions. New heresies will appear, and numbers of priests will proclaim their right to marriage. A pope will arise, perhaps, who will not suffer himself to be unscrupulously invested with infallibility, a sort of divinity attributed to man. This pope can summon a new council, a genuine council, which, in view of the imminent ruin of the religious edifice, will resolve to support it by liberal concessions. If this council does not dare to lay hands on the doctrine, it will allow the priest such tolerant interpretations that intolerance will gradually disappear, and the sentence of eternal damnation will become only a metaphor. The imagination can, with sense, conceive of a Christian church without miracles, and without priests debarred from society.

For my own part, this is just what I should desire, that we might be spared future dangers resulting from persecuted, consequently exasperated, beliefs. To the odious massacre of hostages we are indebted for the disgrace of pilgrimages, and the horror of that liberty of conscience which, with the stupidity of the middle ages, excludes certain portion of the people, as in 1793 and 1815.

The marriage of ex-Father Hyacinthe is a great scandal to the Church, at the present time ; and, with its usual ability, the religious press is giving him all the notoriety possible. The great criminal who is presenting himself before public opinion, with the resigned assurance of an honest man, ought not to be too much provoked at all this disturbance. He feels a conviction which we do not share. He thinks, even now, that he can call himself a priest and a Catholic. The distinction which he attempts to establish between the Roman and the Latin Church seems to us rather arbitrary ; and we discern here a little of the subtlety of the priest. In our mind, he is a perfect heretic, and we congratulate him ; for heresies form the grand vitality of the Christian ideal : nor are we scandalized at this subtlety,

the sole remnant of ecclesiastical cloth which has clung to the side of the future father of a family. It is a logical support of his conviction, a genuine need of his cause. It is easy to throw the frock to the dogs ; and consequently this eagerness to throw off the yoke has prevented the success of previous attempts by priests in favor of marriage. Here is one who is not willing to lose his indelible reputation, and does not abjure his calling by contracting marriage. “ It is well for a priest to be married,” he said to himself. “ I will be married, and I will remain a priest.”

So be it ! You have changed your condition to that of a Protestant pastor ; but not admitting Protestantism, *the error of Luther*, which is, in your opinion, *in a state of rupture with the genuine traditions and necessary unity of the Church*, you are, at present, alone in your opinion ; you are founding a church *aside*. I hope that it will have numerous adherents ; for, without being either Protestant or Catholic, I see, as every one does, the fatal and disgraceful consequences of the celibacy of priests. Let them marry, then, and receive no more confessions ! Will Father Hyacinthe continue to receive confessions ?

That is a question. Is the secret of the con-

fessional compatible with the existence of conjugal love? If I were a Catholic, I should not distress myself very much on the subject. Discretion is easier than restraint; and, moreover, I should say to my children, "Never have secrets that it is too hard to reveal, and you will never stand in dread of the gossip of the rector's wife."

But I do not intend to joke upon this subject. I am convinced that the pious ladies who will follow M. Hyacinthe-Loyson in his new career may still open their hearts to him in perfect safety; and I hope that he may receive many faithful penitents. They will have taken a step in the service of the Church, and will be protesting against one of the principal causes of its dissolution.

This declaration of Father Hyacinthe's is really very fine and very touching. Is it so from talent alone? ask some. No! talent is fine only when it serves to express some fine sentiment. There are, in this article, outpourings of the heart and utterances of conscience which penetrate to the heart and the conscience. It presents an idea of true love, a respect for nature in its divine sense, a chaste veneration for matrimony, which would repress a smile and call forth tears. It is really

very grand ; and this strange piece, written by a priest, will perhaps become a sort of new gospel for future members of a new church. A married priest, Father Hyacinthe — do not let us deprive him of his title of priest and monk — will be able to marry other priests, and set their regenerated consciences at peace.

I would not submit to the unpleasant duty of revealing all my thoughts. I do not acknowledge any mediator between God and myself. I believe this mediator useless when he is not harmful, and harmful when he is not destructive ; but as man will, for years to come, feel the need of a priest, let us hope that the latter may be at least as pure if not as noble as Father Hyacinthe.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CURIOUS BOOK.

SEPT. 12, 1872.

“**L**ES Enchantements de Madame Prudence de Saman L'Esbatx.” This is the odd title of one of the most curious books that I have ever read. It was printed at Sceaux, and is sold, I believe, under the galleries of the Odéon; as if the author did not care to seek great publicity by any special announcement. I can imagine why; but I have only to judge of the book, and not betray the pseudonyme.

It is the true history of a life; and a careful perusal of it might be recommended to those investigating minds, who, at the present day, are writing or meditating upon the influence of woman in the society of to-day and of the future.

The aim of the author is clearly defined, and expressed in a few lines. “Only distinguished talents are worthy of occupying the attention of the public; but, feeling that woman's fate is some-

times so wretched, I thought it might be interesting to see one woman follow the dictates of her heart, and rank love and independence above every thing in life. I write for those who are fond of the emotional, who enjoy simple narratives, memoirs, and, perhaps remotely, the moral and physical questions connected therewith."

After this brief introduction, she enters upon her narration; and we regret that she has given us so few particulars of her childhood. A person endowed with such powerful originality must either have received an eccentric education, or been systematically left to her own free will.

She merely informs us that, the daughter of an indulgent, rich, and intelligent father, she was brought up "in luxury and pleasure." Her father lost his entire fortune; but, active and intelligent, he was repairing his loss, when death ended his career. His wife survived him but a short time. The orphan did not give herself the least anxiety, in a material point of view, respecting the fate that was in store for her.

I do not believe that she was ever in actual distress. She probably never suffered from that slavery, that scourge, of life; whether by assiduous toil she succeeded in charming it away, or

whether, raised by a feeling of real stoicism above privations, she did not feel its power.

“From the time that I was eight or ten years of age, I was devout. I read a Bible that I found at home, and every morning I kept my sister to pray with me. My father discovered us several times on our knees. When I was twelve or thirteen years of age, he requested my mother to let me read the correspondence between Voltaire and the King of Prussia. I lost faith in the Bible, but not my natural feeling towards God, which has endured, and been my greatest support in life. I have never ceased praying to God, and adoring him; but, from the age of twelve to fourteen, a great anxiety, a certain fear, disturbed the innocent studies in which I would willingly have passed my existence; for we encounter Minerva at the two extremities of life.”

It does not appear, however, that these early emotions affected the development of her intellect; for she adds soon after, “I found much enjoyment then in literature, and in the history of England; and I began to study Latin.”

^ This taste for history soon turned into a practical philosophy.

“Incited by the study of Roman history, I

sought to preserve, amid the distresses of my country (invasion) and my family, that dignity of mind enjoined by the ancients in reverse as in prosperity.”

She does not appear to have mourned very deeply the loss of her parents. Although she mentions them with praise, I doubt if she were brought up with tenderness. Her first affection was for a woman who had always been like a mother to her, for whom she had a feeling of veneration. She lived in the country with this superior woman.

“The Abbey du Vallon was situated in the woods, six or seven leagues from Paris; but these woods seemed a hundred leagues from the city. The country around displayed that style of beauty common to Gaul, which is renowned for its shade, its Druidical forests, its limpid streams, the whistling of the wind, and the music of the storm; nature without brilliancy, without heat, without sun, but dreamy, tempestuous, inspiring.

“I was born here, in reality, if to be born is to feel and love.”

Here she makes the acquaintance of a man whose ideal beauty and superior mind she describes with complacence, evincing alternations

of ardent passion and stoical discretion, which astonish us to a certain degree. We wonder how so much reason can be combined with such enthusiasm, and why this powerful reason could not overcome her desire for life at any cost. Is not a manly education a greater source of protection for the young girl than for the young man?

No; but in both cases it renders a fall more harmless, and quickly heals the wounds. It healed Madame de Saman's wounds so suddenly, that we are led to doubt if her passion could have been so intense. No one would be astonished, that, under the influence of her struggling emotions, she should write or read romances with increased ardor and facility. But it was not left to romances alone, to draw her from her secret anguish: it was still more the work of history and philosophy, of a variety and succession of serious studies, of useful and remarkable productions, to which she devoted herself with eager satisfaction, just after she had passed the most important crisis. She succeeded in heroically abandoning love for austere Pallas, as they expressed it in those days. Did she love the less?

That she describes affection so charmingly, and with such courageous disregard of self, because

her own love was deep, is not to be doubted ; nor can it be questioned that her mind was powerful, her character remarkably tempered. It is of minor importance to me, that her friends and lovers may have suffered from unrequited affection or wounded self-love : I am forced to admire that power in which I behold a curious verification of the transformation of intellectual sex by means of a masculinely intellectual culture.

Yet the male sex persist in their opinion, notwithstanding such particular instances as Alexandre Dumas has so well described in that pamphlet¹ of his, which has just created such a sensation. I do not admit his conclusions, consequently do not comprehend his aim ; but I highly appreciate the more important features of the book, the criticism and descriptions. Madame de Saman's book is, as it were, a flagrant proof of the justice of these statements. She faithfully portrays and frankly acknowledges that longing for power which is characteristic of woman. We are impressed, too, with that sense of the possession of the *me*, which gives her strength in weakness, and victory in defeat. She approaches love with unequalled intrepidity. She does not brave danger :

¹ *L' Homme-Femme.*

she courts it. She submits to the downfall which, in her own eyes, is a triumph; for she desires to conquer the scruples of an austere love, a proud spiritualism, inimical to passions. She struggles to draw to her own manner of loving, which she esteems the only good and true method, that man whose happiness she seeks to promote by the full development of his heroism. The man struggles with his feelings, fearing to end his career of single blessedness. His individuality is very strong, and the struggle powerful. Would the woman have triumphed if she had been truly a woman? Madame de Saman falls voluntarily, and then she flees; but under what conditions? She is about to become a mother. Does she take this step from a feeling of vengeance? Does she wish to punish the man, still deeply in love with her, who does not offer her full protection? No. This perfectly sincere woman has not a feeling of spite or blame for him whom she leaves. She merely says, "He was ambitious, and I was the sufferer; but I understood it, being ambitious myself."

She tried to make him understand the ideal of a faithful union of mutual devotion; but she met with the obstacle of a character perhaps inferior to her own, certainly quite different. She be-

comes discouraged, and flees. A part of her time she spends in Italy, but the greater portion in some solitary country place, where she divides her time between her child, the study of books, and the contemplation of nature. An amazing calm succeeds the most violent emotions. Her labors are greatly assisted by memory, perseverance, and ease of comprehension; and these varied forms of employment comprise what she styles *her enchantments*. You would infer from the title that Armide is going to relate the magic incantations by means of which she attracts and retains her cavaliers; but it is quite the reverse: it is she who yields to enchantments in the form of love or friendship, and by study creates them for herself, to be enjoyed in retirement.

I find nowhere in her narration an expression of maternal affection; but, if she has not spoken of it, she has felt it. She brought up her children without concealing any thing from them or from other people. She probably instructed them in Greek, Latin, history, literature, philosophy,—every thing with which she was thoroughly acquainted; and she made men of them. It is evident that, in her peculiar situation, the silence of her pen was owing to a haughty and prudent

reserve. She is like a Roman matron, who, wishing to bring up strong men, conceals from them the weakness of her heart, and does not even speak of them with tenderness, for fear of yielding to her emotions.

Thus she endures all her trials alone. Her conscience is very powerful, and she exhibits a classical fondness for ancient virtue and religious faith, yet manifests no regret nor remorse for the past: she regards it as an inevitable fatality, feeling that she ought to submit to its trials, and appreciate its comforts.

She guards against the sacrifice of dignity, reason, justice, liberty, and life, when she sees them threatened. She writes to her friend at a time before she was in love, "You say that, in consideration of genius, certain failings are overlooked, but not justified. What if the sensibility which leads to these failings is also the source of the genius? Shall it overcome itself? What would have become of the talent of Madame de Staël, de Sapho, and many others, if they had lived a life of struggles? Was not their experience worth more than the triumph gained from such a conflict? I make no assertion. I wish to investigate, to fix my confused ideas; but does

there exist a woman, who, beholding the dawn of a passionate feeling, would say, 'I will stifle my rising emotion'?"

These reflections, added to others, justify the definition which she gives of herself at the commencement: "A person who holds love and independence above every thing." Surely this is a great problem to solve; for therein lies the solution of a fearful antithesis. Society is not arranged according to this view. On the contrary, by prescribing fidelity in love, it imposes the sacrifice of liberty. My ideal would be a condition in which this sacrifice would be, to both sexes, as welcome as it was meritorious. Madame de Saman ought not to have asserted the contrary; but, yielding to the feelings of youth, she sought to overcome the difficulty without giving sufficient attention to surrounding circumstances. Her friend mildly remonstrated against this terrible resolution, fearing for her an old age imbittered by delusion. And here is the book which replies to every thing, and quietly announces the triumph. Her old age is peaceful, happy, and dignified. After a series of pleasures, she tastes the delights of a quiet and studious life, and the satisfaction of a mind in perfect harmony with itself.

The account of her pleasures is, naturally, very interesting ; yet it is always the same drama, with a slight change of characters, the acts being very singularly connected. Although new ties are created, the woman never forsakes the old ones. She does not wish to extinguish the fires she has once lighted ; but, with a pious and charming coquetry, preserves them with as much respect as she would altar-fires. Do not be shocked. She clings to the man whose love she shares, confiding this new affection to those who ask for a renewal of the past, and avoiding the perils of an interview by confessing, with emotion, how much pleasure she has derived from these interviews in former times. She holds it as a rule, that to love once is to love always, and that those whom she has abandoned, either from becoming weary of their society, or from fear of restraint, are still worthy of her everlasting affection ; and she characterizes the delicate nature of these friendships by the name of love. She follows these eminent men in their labors, becomes interested in their success in literature, in politics, or in every-day life, and gains their utmost confidence by a like reciprocation. She retains their esteem, and occasionally their love, although she lays no claim

to the latter. Here is displayed a facility of relationships, which recalls the philosophical love of the last century, deprived of its worst feature, libertinism. This insight into the private life of the great men in the early part of our century is very piquant, curious, and instructive. It is, as it were, the bubbling of romance before its systemization in 1830: it is admiration for Napoleon I., Chateaubriand, Madame de Staël.

Madame de Saman never mentions Corinne; but it is this ideal that leads her to Italy, and is the cause of her long-continued partiality for a certain fascinating Oswald, whom she constantly quits with delight, yet receives again with ecstasy. Let me remark, by the way, that never was a man described as more lovable and charming, and that a woman-fascinator has accomplished his object when he succeeds in obtaining, with all his perfections and imperfections, a portrait from such a masterly hand.

This romantic fermentation of which I am speaking forms a phase of literary history extremely interesting as a study. Madame de Saman is a specimen of it, and throws considerable light on the subject. People were romantic without saying so, without being aware of it,

and yet they were classical in many respects. Victor Hugo and his school brought about a revolution, which I consider a misfortune. We owe to him, it is true, the brilliancy of a splendid Pleiades, surrounding an immortal glory; and I forgive the outburst of bad taste, ridiculous imitation, and actual insanity, which have enlarged the circle of the school, although this is fatal to every literary epoch. What I deplore is the fragmentary division of labor, the sectarianism, the narrow prejudice, the systematic contempt of all previous conquests. It is this sort of amputation of our own faculties which is always the result of exclusiveness in matters of taste, and which from the domain of art extends to that of philosophy, politics, even science, ending in contraction of the mind, narrowness of appreciation, the supremacy of speciality.

Madame de Saman has kept the seal of her period unbroken. She admires René, but not to the exclusion of Racine, Corneille, and other great writers of the age. Although deeply interested in passing events, she does not neglect antiquity, but seeks to bring its grand models to life again in her own mind. She regards Mignet and Plutarch, M. Thiers and Tacitus,

with equal solicitude. She is unwilling to admit a democratic future, being quite in love with the past; and, without denying that genius might spring from the lower ranks, sees civilization only in aristocratic institutions. Probably she could not reach Victor Hugo's prophetic path; but she might accommodate herself to a republic in which M. Thiers would be upheld by Béranger, Chateaubriand, Napoleon I., Sainte-Beuve, the Médicis, Lamennais, Libri, Pericles, Lord Byron, Aspasia, and Joan of Arc. It remains to be seen whether such a combination would be possible in our day.

But the book in question is not one in which politics are of any real importance. The main object of the author is to compare the events of the past, and, above all, the men of ancient times, with the events and the men of the present. This was the revolutionary method, to which Madame de Saman still clings. In our times, this amounts to originality, so obsolete has that method become. However, we like to see it revived, with its attendant consequences, in the mind and the conduct of so remarkable a person. How many dangers she has encountered, how many delusions overcome, what agitation, mental

contradictions, and anguish surmounted, before arriving at the desired port! But she reached it at last: her method did her good service. She commences and finishes the first part of her narration by prayers; and these prayers are beautiful, grand, humane. Among them is the following:—

“My God, this is our favorite season. The winds of autumn have commenced to blow, and a sweet and holy sadness steals over Nature. The heart of man, free from the need of terrestrial affections, turns for delight to itself, to the beauties of the universe,—their grandeur and melancholy. It turns to thee, O God! It draws near thee from the depths of its exile, from the midst of emotions which lead us to thee,—the holy and passionate feelings of autumn, the overcast though beloved sky, the gentle rain more precious than the morning dew, the decline of day as solemn as the evening of life, stored with reminiscences, calmness, and hope. But past emotions, passions as fleeting as these melancholy clouds; our tears, bitter and sweet; our elated youth,—will these delights of the soul, like matter which though transformed remains indestructible, ever be restored to us? Wilt thou give us back those

sacred days which were the light of our existence, and which alone would be worth the pain of living our lives over again ? ”

We see this soul which love has filled, but not broken, aspiring after love in a future existence. It has suffered much, but has loved much ; and in the remembrance of this it rejoices with renewed strength. All these original and charming prayers ought to be read. There is one in which she asks God to bless her saints of the West ; “ not only St. Thomas, Pascal,” but also the philosophers of the last century, who “ placed God at the pinnacle of all faiths. Freed from ancient and prejudiced forms, through these adorers of Thy name, we have been enabled to re-enter thy temples, to seek thee once more, and to acknowledge with rapture that thy justice extends equally to all mankind. Priests of thine, they were stimulated to restore the homage due to thee by the sorrows of their fellow-men. True caliphs of God, through them will thy name be exalted. Bless them for having destroyed forever hypocrisy and suffering. Let us glorify these new saints, interpreters of divine wisdom, conquerors of fanaticism and worldly glory.”

The whole of this book is curious. Here is a

very pious person, feeling the need of worship, and frequenting the church:—

“The profound silence of thy temple, the dim light, the idea of divinity, overcome us; and we bend the knee to thee, O God! Thou alone canst arouse our better feelings. If, in the world in which we live, we are too credulous or too generous, we very soon receive our punishment. Our fondness is our destruction; our enthusiasm leads to misfortune, our magnanimity makes us victims. We have loved too much, we have suffered too much, on account of all these qualities; but in thy house, my God, we can never be too pure, never too generous, never too noble, never too sensitive. Here our energy can soar aloft; but, whatever height we attain, we are still far from thee. What strength and grandeur in ourselves are not effaced by an idea of the strength and grandeur that lies in thy infinite nature? How sweet, how holy, thus to give ourselves up to thee, and to the dreams of beauty which thou hast awakened in our imaginations!”

Would not one suppose that he was reading a perfectly orthodox prayer, and should not the curate of this village be very proud to behold a

lady of such rare merit on her knees in his church in profound meditation? He lends an ear, is moved, admires, and with reason. He is edified and affected as he has never been before. Perhaps he has never before, when preaching from the pulpit to the neighboring lords, experienced such lofty feelings, such noble motives for adoring the God whom he serves. But what is it? Do his ears deceive him? Is it an angel, or a demon, who is speaking? "O God! far from confining this power of adoration and exaltation to a single faith, thou hast granted it to the North as well as the South; and Asia and even the Indies have felt it, as well as the Christians. Thus thy divine spirit clothes itself in the necessary forms, and through these forms asserts its immortality."

The good priest hides his face, and flees in trepidation.

But spiritualism without any fixed belief loves that grandeur of soul which has respect for all earnest believers. We may deny God, and so place ourselves beyond this notion. The moment that we earnestly seek after the truth, we are exercising a human and a divine right; for if God has implanted within us the spirit of investigation, it is that we may make use of it; but we

must acknowledge that the affirmation of divinity is just as sacred a right. I am on the side of those who believe in God, yet neither hate nor fear those who reject him. I have much sympathy for that fervent soul who is not exclusively Christian, yet enters quietly the temple of his age and his country, at the same time holding to his individuality, his sentiments, and his ideas.

As to the great battle of life so bravely fought by her, does it shock reason or that individual right which permits the sacrifice of ourselves to a belief firmly and deliberately formed? Assuredly not. Does it shock the moral sense? In consideration of her particular situation, and of that depth of grand loyalty and perfect tolerance which characterizes Madame de Saman, no one is justified in throwing the first stone. On my own behalf, while making certain reservations to myself, I throw her a crown of roses and oak-leaves.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FOREST OF FONTAINEBLEAU.

THE following is a letter that I have received:—

“The petition of the artists had obtained a most favorable reception with the president of the republic: notwithstanding, an auction-sale of the greater portion of the lots took place on the day appointed.

“For the future prevention of such extensive mutilation, the subscribers of the petition have formed themselves into a *company for the artistic protection of the forest of Fontainebleau*; and, that their object may be perfectly apparent, have unanimously voted the following resolution:—

“‘*Resolved*, That the forest of Fontainebleau ought to be classed with those national and historical monuments which it is indispensable to preserve for the admiration of artists and tourists, and that its actual division into an artistic and a non-artistic portion ought to be permitted only under the strictest limitations.’”

I am not aware of what occurred in regard to the forest of Fontainebleau; but that is of little consequence. It is not for me to criticise what I do not understand: yet I cannot but approve of every effort made for the preservation of this natural monument, very properly classed, by the petitioners, among the national monuments. To divide or to sell it would be to destroy it, and I do not hesitate to declare that a sacrilege. Here would be another disgrace to add to the conflagrations of Paris.

This is a sorrowful epoch indeed, when on one side riot demolishes the archives of civilization, and on the other the State, which represents order and preservation, destroys, or threatens to destroy, the great works of Time and Nature. Whether they be converted into ruins or money, it is not the less destruction; and I am not sure if, of these two vandalisms, that which is committed in cold blood, legally, and after deliberation, is not the more senseless and disgraceful.

The petitioners who request me to unite my efforts to theirs, and to whom I hereby give public adherence, very justly plead the needs of the artist, and the gratification of the tourist. But there is something more to be considered; for

public opinion is composed of a mediocrity utterly indifferent to the small fraction of ordinary lovers of nature. I think that we may go still farther, and appeal to the learned to demonstrate that these venerable forests are an essential element of our physical equilibrium; that they contain, within their sanctuaries, principles of life which cannot be neutralized with impunity; and that all the inhabitants of France are directly interested in not suffering the demolition of these vast shades, reservoirs of moisture essential to the air which they breathe, and the soil which they cultivate.

One of my illustrious friends, a poet of the highest order, whom we have recently lost, — Théophile Gautier, — had paradoxes to which he did not become a dupe. He said to us, one day, that plants stood in the relation to us of *suckers*, absorbing our respirable air; and that *his* hygienic ideal was to live in a garden composed of avenues and borders of bitumen, with good seats of capadine, and nargiles always lighted; the whole to resemble flower-beds and groups of trees.

Some one remarked, that, if plants did absorb a portion of our aërial nourishment, they gave us a hundred-fold compensation in the elements of mo-

lecular nutrition, a deprivation of which would prove mortal. He knew this perfectly well, for he knew a good deal; and he could maintain an argument against himself, which no one could have pleaded better.

The large vegetables are the fireplaces of life, which spread their benefits far and wide; and, if it is dangerous or hurtful to live always directly under their shade, it has been well authenticated that the suppression of their emanations would produce a fatal change in the atmospheric conditions of human life. It would be suppressing those great fans which keep the air fresh, and divide the electricity above our heads; it would be impoverishing the soil, which is endowed with a circulation, so to speak, sub-cutaneous.

Cultivation scratches, digs, and keeps healthy the delicate crust; but there are certain rocky or woody parts that escape this constant levelling, and so retain the moisture which goes to fertilize the subsoil for great distances. There is apparently very little water in the gravel and rocks of Fontainebleau; but the subsoil, which has kept the trees alive for so long a time, must be extremely rich: and this richness must be derived from afar. Destroy the trees, which by their

shade supply that freshness to the soil that is consumed by their roots, and you are destroying the harmony necessary, indispensable, to the region in which you live.

Do not let us undervalue the importance of this question. Everybody is not capable of making a study of the oaks and sandstone of Fontainebleau; every one has not a taste for it: but all men have a right to the beauty of these things, and there are more people capable of enjoying it than artists interested in portraying it. Each person has a certain amount of intelligence and poetry; and therefore an extensive education is not necessary for its special development. Every one has a right to the beauty and poetry of our forests, and of this one in particular, which is one of the most beautiful things in the world. To destroy it would be, in a moral sense, a spoliation, an actually savage attempt at that right of intellectual propriety which constitutes him who owns nothing but the *sight* of beautiful things the equal, sometimes the superior, of him who possesses them.

The rage for individual possession ought to be confined within certain limits prescribed by nature. Shall we go so far as to pretend that the

atmosphere ought to be divided, and sold to those who have the means of purchasing? If such a thing were possible, would we henceforth see each proprietor sweeping his corner of the heavens, and piling up the clouds on his neighbor's portion; or, according to his taste, gathering them in for himself, and asking for a law that should forbid any man without money from beholding the golden sunset, or the fantastic splendor of the clouds driven by a storm? I hope that this happy time will never come; but I feel that the destruction of beautiful forests is a proposition not less monstrous, and that we have no more right in an intellectual than in a hygienic sense, to remove large trees from a public domain. They are as sacred as the fertilizing clouds with which they hold incessant communication; they ought to be protected and respected, never left to barbarous caprice, nor to the egotistic want of the individual. Beautiful and majestic, even in their decrepitude, they are as much the property of our descendants as they were of our ancestors. They are eternal temples, the mighty architecture and ornamental foliation of which is constantly renewed; sanctuaries of silence and revery, where successive generations have the right to assemble

for meditation, and for the development of that sense of grandeur of which every man has a consciousness and a need in the depths of his nature.

The forest of Fontainebleau is not beautiful merely on account of its vegetation: the undulations of its surface are extremely graceful and elegant, and its piles of rock are exceedingly ornamental; but its delightful glades, its wonderful chaos, its melancholy walks, would lose their charm if deprived of trees. Natural science, too, has a right to protest against the destruction of the smaller plants, which would be caused by the dryness of the atmosphere after the tall trees had been removed. The botanist and the entomologist demand consideration as much as the painter and the poet; but, aside from all this *élite*, there is, I repeat, the human race, which we ought not to deprive of any noble enjoyment, especially just after an atrocious war has sullied and destroyed so many sacred objects in nature and civilization. Frenchmen, we have all of us, or nearly all of us, children or grandchildren whom we take by the hand for a walk, with a view to instructing them in our ideas of life, to whatever class we belong. Wherever we are, we call their attention to surrounding objects, — a ship, a railway train,

a market, a church, a river, a mountain, a city. From the baker's shop where the little *prolétaire* sees small cakes in the form of men and animals, to the museum where the *bourgeois* leads his heir, explaining, to the best of his ability, what excites his own admiration; from the field where the peasant child gathers a flower or a stone, to the great royal parks and our public gardens, where rich and poor can see and be instructed, — each serves as a sanctuary of initiation to the child, or to the adult who has hitherto been deprived of advantages, and now seeks to emerge from his state of childhood. I know very well that there is a *prolétaire* taciturn or talkative, perverse or passionate, who cares only for social contest, observes nothing, and makes no exertion to raise his mind above the level of that condition against which he pretends to be struggling; but there is also the universal *prolétaire*, the child, that is the ignorant of all classes, he whom we might fit for social life, and for the more definite struggles of the future. We are each holding such a one by the hand; for he is the pupil of our heart, our offspring whom we carry in our arms. We take him to walk, and mould his thoughts with our explanations. If he be an intelligent pupil, he

will very soon take an interest in every thing that is subject to the possession of the body or the mind.

When you have led him to every centre whence radiates social life, or introduced him into the midst of its activity ; when you have explained to him the meaning of industry, the sciences, arts, and politics, — there remains one feeling of which he will have no conception if you have not revealed it to him, and that is a religious respect for the beautiful in nature. This is a source of calm and lasting enjoyment, an immersion of the being in the mysterious sources whence it has sprung, furnishing a pious and positive conception of life, of which your railroads, your ships, your factories, your theatres, and your churches have given him no clear and accurate idea. He will perceive how life is made useful or wasted ; but he will not learn how it is produced and renewed, nor that man belongs to himself, and has a consciousness of his being. The tumult of social existence causes us to act, for the most part, without knowing why, and to mistake our passions and appetites for actual needs. We yield too seldom to meditation, every thing having a tendency to divert our minds from

this state. Society is forcibly hurled into a life which is artificial at every point, with every form of appetite or vanity to demand satisfaction. It has no other aim, no other illusion, no other promise, in the estimation of the masses.

Let us make a little resistance (that is, as much as possible, for, alas ! it will then be but little) against that torrent which is sweeping our progeny into its surging billows. Do not let us narrow our horizon to the limits of a field, or the enclosure of a kitchen-garden. Let us make room for the mind of the child, and teach him to imbibe the poetry of that creation which our industry is tending to completely denaturalize with fearful rapidity. In these times, the young man who has a keen sense of this poetry is an exceptional being ; for, in the greater number of families nowadays, contemplation is regarded as a loss of time, and revery as an idle or foolish habit. Yet we are conscious of the beauty of a landscape, and we should not wish the pupil to be so destitute of sensibility as not to perceive it.

I acknowledge this ; for I am not one of those who systematically wage war on the *bourgeois*. I have never made a crusade against the grocers : I am convinced that they may sell capers and

cloves, and know that they are desirable commodities, not merely because they bring in money, but because they are agreeable to the taste. I feel that a man may be a good peasant and an irreproachable ploughman, without being deaf to the song of the lark, or insensible to the perfume of the mayflower. This is as it ought to be. I should like a man to be a perfect notary, and yet a poet while he is rambling through the country, or travelling along the Seine. I wish that every man's education were complete, and that he were denied no rudimentary instruction. It is a prejudice to suppose that a man must understand the refinements of language, the resources of the palette, the technicalities of art, to be a delicate critic, or possess an exquisite sensitiveness. To express is an acquired faculty: to appreciate is a need, consequently a universal right. Artists may throw all the light they can, — it is their mission; but let us invite all men to make use of this right for their own enjoyment, and let them acquire a relish for it, without feeling obliged to cease being good grocers, good farmers, or perfect notaries, if such is their vocation.

Moreover, an education exclusively artistic is not an infallible means of developing in man a

taste for the beautiful and the true. It involves too much discussion, too much conventionalism, and too many professional points. By dint of learning *how* to see, and *how* to express himself, it is quite possible that the disciple of many masters will often lose the faculty of seeing with his own eyes, and portraying with his individual sense. Nature does not surrender herself at the command of the professor. Essentially mysterious, she has a particular revelation for each individual, and she does not repeat her methods. One must see her himself, and examine her with his own feelers. She is eloquent to all, but never capable of a thorough translation; for, beneath the prodigality of her expressions, she has one word concealed, which she keeps to herself; and, thank God in the name of art, man will keep up an eternal search for this word. No painter, no poet, no musician, no naturalist, will ever drain that cup of beauty, which is continually overflowing. The most insignificant little bird, as well as the most splendid drinker, will always find wherewith to quench its thirst; and after you have assimilated yourselves into artists, poets, and naturalists, you will still have every thing to learn, if you have not seen Nature in her privacy, if you have not in person questioned the Sphinx.

What a conquest for man to undertake, for any man now living or yet to be born! To enter into Nature, to seek the oracle of the sacred forest, and bring back the word, be it but a single word, which will spread over his whole existence the exquisite delight of the possession of his being! For this it is well worth while to preserve the temples whence this beneficent divinity has not yet been driven.

It is time for us to consider that Nature is passing away. Under the hand of the peasant, the trees are disappearing, the lands losing their perfume; and we shall be obliged to travel far from cities, to enjoy silence, to freely breathe the emanations of the plant, or to interrupt the secrecy of the brook that flows and babbles unmolested. Everywhere we see felling, levelling, straightening, fencing, training. If, in these cultivated tracts laid out by the line and the rule, which claim the appellation of *country*, you see here and there a clump of fine trees, be certain that it is surrounded by walls, and that it is private property, where you have no right to take your child, to show him an oak or a linden tree.

The rich alone have the right to preserve a small portion of nature for their personal enjoy-

ment. By the time that the agrarian law shall be established, there will not be a tree remaining in France. At Berry, the elm has been mutilated, to feed the sheep in winter with the leaves, and to heat ovens with the branches. There is nothing left now but deformities.

Everybody knows the history of the white willow in France. It is our finest tree, and grows to an enormous size. There are now, perhaps, not three remaining ; although certain regions are covered with little clusters of whitish foliage supported on great, shapeless logs of wood abounding in cracks ; and these are the white willow, the giant of our clime.

The majority of the extensive woods have decreased in size. Where can we now find the forest of Ardennes ? Those which are yet extant are in process of demolition, and have no durable beauty. As the need for wood becomes more pressing, the tree, hardly full-grown, is disrespectfully and remorselessly hewn down. How many noble giants of the forest have been seen to fall by persons of my age ! There are no more left. We must now invent frame-works of iron ; for very soon we shall not be able to find either beams or rafters. Everywhere fuel is

expensive and scarce. Coal is dear too; for Nature is becoming exhausted, and scientific industry cannot immediately devise a remedy.

Shall we send to America for all our lumber? But the virgin forest is fast vanishing, and in its turn will become exhausted. If we are not careful, the tree will disappear, and the end of the world will take place from dryness, without the necessity of a deluge; and this will be the fault of man. Do not laugh. Those who have studied the subject view it with terror.

More trees will be planted, many are being planted, I know; but the work was commenced so late that the evil is, perhaps, irreparable. Another summer like that of 1870 in France, and we shall see if an equilibrium can be maintained between the exigencies of consumption, and the productive forces of the soil. There is one question which has not been sufficiently studied, and still remains in mystery. It is this: Nature becomes weary when man changes her work. She has habits which she quits forever, if interrupted for too long a time, putting her forces to another use. She was inclined to produce the larger vegetation, and liberally furnished sap. Condemned to transfer her influences, the soil

adopts another means of action. Cleared and manured, it becomes fertile at the surface, but loses its mighty depth of power; and it is not by any means certain that this can be restored at pleasure.

The domain of man is growing too narrow for his agglomerations. It needs extension. The population ought to emigrate, and seek the wilderness. In this way, it would go on all right; for this planet is still vast and rich enough for the number of its inhabitants; but there is great peril in delay. The cravings of men are becoming imperious necessities, which nothing can restrain; and, if these necessities are not controlled, there will in time be no proportion between the demands of man and the productions of the planet. Who knows but whole societies have been swept away by desolation? Who knows but our satellite, which we suppose destitute of inhabitants and void of atmosphere, has lost its population through the improvidence of generations, and the exhaustion of the overstimulated forces of surrounding nature?

While waiting for humanity to wake up and bethink itself, let our forests be preserved, let our grand old trees be respected; and, if it must be

in the name of art, if this consideration has any weight in these times, let us come to the assistance of our intrepid artists; but let us likewise bravely protest, in the name of our own rights, against brutish and insane measures. Whilst, on every side, very unsightly churches are being constructed, do not let us suffer the grand cathedrals of nature, which exercised a powerful influence over our ancestors in the rearing of their temples, to be snatched from the veneration of our descendants. When the earth shall have become mutilated and devastated, our productions and our ideas will accord with the poor, unsightly objects which meet our eyes at every turn. Narrow ideas re-act upon our feelings, which become warped and impoverished. Man needs to see Eden in the distance. I know that many say, "After we are gone, the world will come to an end." This is the most detestable and blasphemous speech that man could utter. It is a formal resignation of his condition as man; for it is the rupture of the link that connects generations.

NOHANT, Nov. 6.

CHAPTER XVI.

L'ANGUSTA.

I SHALL review this work uninfluenced by my personal feelings towards the author, whom I love beyond every thing. I do not feel that I am yielding to the sin of partiality in saying that I entertain a very high opinion of his book. If people ill-disposed towards us, or those differing from us in taste, think me wrong, others more benevolent, or more inclined to encourage certain attempts, will think me right.

I am of opinion, that, among other new works, we ought to turn our attention to the romance, which is, when we consider the degree of perfection to which it is carried at the present day, an artistic production of recent creation.

Formerly a romance sufficed for the enjoyment of one or more centuries: now a new one is required almost every day. I do not claim that the novel is of recent invention; but we may say that

its development has taken place in response to new requirements ; and, in this sense, we may consider it as an art belonging specially to modern times.

Without entering into any criticism, but merely for the sake of research and examination, as we study objects in nature without pretending to call on science, I ask myself if there is any one method for constructing a novel, and if every one has not a right to employ his own universally, or to vary it at pleasure. I do not see any absolute rule to propose in this regard. Every school method appears to me only an impediment. I regard the art of novel-writing as an art pre-eminently free ; free as human speech, which prevents no one who is able to make use of it, from relating a story in his own way, provided his mind can furnish one. So all methods are good, and all serve as a study for him who is seeking the best style ; but, after all, the best style is always that used by the greatest mind.

This granted, we can take pleasure in seeing the same author pursue different methods. One day Balzac, the leader of French romance in our century, took a notion to publish some droll stories ; and, to render them inaccessible to vulgar minds that might make an abuse of them, he

attempted to write them in the style and orthography of Rabelais. In this way the book was a sort of guarded treasure which the learned, serious in their nature, could alone enjoy; at least, such was Balzac's idea. Was he right, or wrong? He would have been wrong to *lose his sauce*, as he expressed it, or to make it so deep that it would have drowned his genius. This is what I feared, and what I told him. Fortunately, this contingency did not depend on himself. Such attempts are harmless for persons of such powerful individuality.

Théophile Gautier, in his preface to "*Capitaine Fracasse*," promises the reader that the conversation of his characters shall be that of the time in which they are represented as living. The author was not to appear himself, and the work was to be "in no way historical except in the coloring of its style." God be praised, his promise was not kept! Gautier's admirable style gained the mastery over all predilections for antiquity, the few ancient expressions which he introduced here and there being blemishes. The finest passages, and those most relished, are those in which the author appears, as in Balzac's droll stories, notwithstanding their resolution to the contrary.

It is not merely the words, and forms of expression, that change: it is the different shades of ideas which they represent. The simple and the labored styles belong to certain stages of enlightenment; and the greatest minds of one of these epochs (although, in a literary sense, it may be superior to the others) may, in an historical point of view, be inferior to those of some other epoch. He who would retain the precise color of any one age must ruthlessly discard certain ideas of another age. Some of our ideas of the present day could not be rendered in the ancient languages; and, even without going very far into the past, it would be difficult to make one's characters describe certain impressions, of which they have been perhaps vaguely conscious, but have never tried to understand, or else have been unable to express.

With sincere modesty, the author of "*L'Angusta*" has often considered the manner of solving the problem of history and literature combined which I have just been discussing, and of which we have often conversed together while engaged in the study of ancient language. Although much of his time has been devoted to researches into natural history, he has not entirely neglected

his reading of literature; and being endowed with an exceedingly vivid and fertile imagination, which the study of positive objects seems rather to kindle than to extinguish, one of his amusements, which I have often shared, is to withdraw his mind for a time from the actual present, and imagine himself as living at some particular epoch in the past. He has described such a condition of the mind in his romance of "Callirhoé," in which a man of modern times, by the study of Etruscan and Roman antiquity, becomes so enamoured of that period, that his imagination converts historical facts into personal reminiscences; and he, quite innocently, begins to relate his own experiences at the time of the invasion of Rome by the Gauls. This fancy takes such a hold upon him as to become a conviction; and he seems to recognize, in those about him, his friends and enemies of former times.

After having finished "Callirhoé," Maurice Sand, incidentally turning his attention to archæology and history, became intensely interested in the middle ages. Wishing to give me a recapitulation of his reading and researches, he began, in fun, to relate to me, in the first person, the life of a cavalier of the thirteenth century, just

as, in "Callirhoé," Marc gives the life of a Gallic conqueror. I found this so amusing and interesting, that I prevailed upon him to write it. Assisted by his great facility in composition, he produced "Raoul de la Chastre;" a novel so closely resembling a chronicle translated, from beginning to end, from the same writer, that he was taken in earnest by the descendants of certain families. Alexandre Dumas, sen., writing to me on the subject, after much praise bestowed on the author, remarks, "It is an extraordinarily successful book. I have sought in vain to discover the method of its composition."

The method was very simple. The author absolutely discarded literary or philosophical personality, to identify himself with a type which has no analogy at the present day. He understood perfectly the historical character of a doughty knight in the time of holy Louis and Philippe le Hardi. He well knew that a strong and generous nature, thrown among half-barbarous surroundings, must have combined the life of a hero and a bandit, an unrestrained sensualist and an excellent *paterfamilias*; that he must have believed in the Devil, and a very little in the Church; occasionally having the feelings of

a true Christian, and even admirable philosophical perceptions (like Roger Bacon, that great prophet of science); then, falling back into the childish wonder of his age, treating royalty with contempt, and constituting himself the chief of gangs; not having comprehended French patriotism in its present light; encountering adventures; undertaking, at his own expense and under his own leadership, crusades and conquests; finally becoming a rich and powerful lord, abounding in gallantry and surfeited with spoils, still remaining the best husband in the world, a loyal cavalier, and a zealous redresser of wrongs. These incompatibilities, which appear so dreadful to us, seemed then quite natural, as their brutality was a relative civilization when we consider the other classes of the society of this epoch,—the workman (a synonyme for slave), the artist, the poet, all obliged to become valets; the peasant rendering homage to Satan, that he might prevent him from having children to maintain, &c. The corruption of this epoch was open and unrestrained. The idea of a hero who encounters all the tragic and burlesque adventures of this formidable age, without fainting, and without the least astonishment, enduring

the dungeon and torture, not to mention wounds inflicted in battle, in order to become at last a contented and happy man,—here was surely a bold conception, which demanded, for its execution, an extraordinary inspiration, a fixed determination, and a certain indifference as to “*What will they say?*” This is a species of literary courage to be commended.

The book has scandalized those persons who feel that the author ought to be responsible for all the deeds and movements of his characters; but those who appreciate a true book, one well conceived and well executed from beginning to end, value it very highly indeed; while those who desire to become acquainted with the life and color of a certain age have read it with interest and profit—foremost among whom is myself.

Don Juan has become a favorite type with our generation. A sincere Catholic, M. Laverdant, a man of an inquiring and original turn, has given us a Don Juan, in many pages of which may be found great depth and real beauty. The legend of Don Juan might be repeated a hundred times, from every point of view. He is some such a myth as Faust, who represents the struggle of mind over matter. Don Juan contends openly for matter

against mind. He is in Rabelais; for every age has had its Don Juan and its Faust; and, if we would reflect, we should see that every thinking man has followed, in reality or in imagination, one of these two courses. Maurice Sand touches on both in his novel. Raoul is the barbarous Don Juan, whose instinct is triumphant; and Roger Bacon, Faust victorious over hell. Raoul represents the energetic and sensual body of the thirteenth century, penetrated by a fugitive ray of intellectual light projected by Bacon. The latter is one of those prodigious apparitions of eternal truth cast, like divine manifestations, into the midst of social darkness. Bacon predicted in the thirteenth century, the scientific, philosophical and industrial conquests of the nineteenth. It is not necessary to inform the reader that Maurice Sand has made Bacon speak according to his (Sand's) fancy. Bacon ought to be read; for here is where Maurice Sand is most ambitious of success.

I will not review my son's other works, which are the effect of his natural method. As my space is limited, I will speak only of "*Le Coq aux Cheveux d'Or*," one of the strangest and most curious of all his books, before turning my attention to his latest novel, "*L'Angusta*."

“Le Coq aux Cheveux d’Or” is the name of a Scythian warrior who has a volcano for a rival ! An odd fancy, but not purely imaginative. We are introduced into the midst of the mythology of ante-historical times ; and when we study deeply into these ancient notions, scattering vestiges of which in the memory of men have furnished material for so many learned and curious books, we are literally dazzled by the imagination of the primitive man. What are our fairy tales, the wonderful stories of the East, the fancies of the Germans and the Slavonians, the sombre or grotesque visions of the middle ages, to these traditions of the human mind at the time of its first flight ? Every thing is a marvel to it, as to the child, who personifies all the phenomena which excite his wonder.

This offered sufficient temptation for a man fond of meditating, and of hoarding up those precious things which fashion disdains. No better herbarium for these plants, which will no longer thrive in the new soil, than the leaves of a novel. The author of “Callirhoé,” faithful to his work of retrospection, introduced into his romance beings sometimes half gods and half men, sometimes half men and half monsters. He searched all the cradles of religious antiquity for those symbolical

figures which surrounded the human race when it struggled to get out of its own cradle. Nothing so strange and yet so grand as some of these figures ; nothing so marvellous as the part they performed in growing society. The romance of " Le Coq aux Cheveux d'Or," in a rapid and florid style, introduces the god Ptah, that genius of subterranean fires, whom the savage warrior is to fight and conquer, that he may obtain possession of the priestess Hemla, his *fiancée*. After many herculean efforts, the warrior, that is, Néméith, rescuing his beloved, is overtaken, in his flight, by the deluge. The picture of the cataclysm which is about to swallow up the Atlantis is truly grand and terrific. Through means in accordance with such a scene, the lovers escape. Hemla has received, from her dying mother, an amulet, a present from Prometheus her ancestor, which she is not to open till the approach of death. She opens it, and a sunbeam escapes, that scatters the clouds. The lovers reach the Scythian land, where they become the founders of the Caucasian race.

This novel is taken for a fairy tale ; and yet it is an accumulation of the most arduous labors of the scholar. Very few persons have the leisure or the taste to read such works, which require,

for their appreciation, special preliminary studies. Maurice Sand has placed within the reach of all an exceedingly animated narrative, by which we can become initiated, in a few hours, into the many fabulous accounts of our historical origin.

In "*L'Angusta*" Maurice has been once more carried away by the vision of a period which he studied for his personal instruction. He enjoyed exceedingly the works of MM. Thierry; and, amidst the sources whence these great historians have drawn with so much discernment, he experienced an intuition of the life of the fifth century of our era. He was struck with a certain resemblance to our own century; and, when I feared that he was undertaking a period too remote for general comprehension in a novel, he very reasonably answered that man of the Lower Empire, by his situation, his ideas, his tastes, and his language, bore a much greater resemblance to us than man of the middle ages. "One could make of a Caius Claudius Umbo, or any other Gallic-Roman," said he, "a much more intelligible character to-day than of Raoul de la Chastre of the thirteenth century; and it appears to me that it could be accomplished with greater ease. We have there authors fruitful in detail, and a written

language, Latin before it has died out. I find, too, comic characters, ancient types which I have met and seized by the hair, as it were, in my investigations into the origin of *masks* and *buffoons*. These emperors of the East have handsome Leaners; these formidable Huns have bullies; and Sidoine Apollinaire is the pedant of the troop. The remarkable women of this epoch are superior in education to those of to-day; and, as to the epoch itself, it is characterized by religious contests bordering on general scepticism, as at the present time."

The next day he read me Claudius Umbo's first letter, and I advised him to continue. Most of the documents of these times, that we possess, are precisely in the form of letters. It seemed odd to me to see a novel composed of such ancient material, and transformed, with apparent ease, from that epistolary style which requires the characters to speak for themselves without any philosophical explanation by the narrator. This is a very good exercise for a special study of the Latin language. The character of Eugenius Creticus is a remarkable specimen of that literature, at the same time Christian and Pagan, which has a right to be quoted as well as any other. The

manners, customs, and material situations are described without any display of learning. True life flows abundantly throughout this book. Published in M. de Girardin's "*La Liberté*," just before the invasion, it has a tint of melancholy prophecy, seeming to signalize the immediate causes of our calamities. Yet these calamities were as little foreseen at Nohant as at Paris; but, in studying into the description of a great social dissolution of the Latin race, the narrator must have foreseen the new crisis in his fancy.

Like Maurice Sand's other novels, "*L'Angusta*" passes rapidly over adventures, combats, reverses, passion, and enterprises. It has always been my opinion that, either in events or sentiments, a novel ought, of all things, to be romantic. In accordance with his idea of historical romance, Maurice, very sensibly, rejects ideality. He does not try to force an opinion nor a doctrine into the heads of his characters. To him, they are not exceptional beings: they impersonate fractions of the race to which they belong. They represent family, tribe, species, like the classifications which assist him in the study of nature; for persons of our time are sensible of what Edgar Quinet has admirably demonstrated, — that the history of man

is dependent on the same laws of development as those which stand foremost in the development of our planet.

But if Maurice Sand omits the minute details of the individual, if he does not seek to infuse into the latter the romantic ideal, he retains, in the position in which he places him, the romantic interest of situation and action. If almost all his novels are conscientious productions of social history, all are what is called *entertaining* in the highest degree, even to those readers who do not appreciate the earnestness of his efforts and aim. His is a healthy and well-kept mind, consequently never wearied nor discouraged with his subject, never disturbed by the thought of what reception will be given him by the public, writing only under the influence of an exceedingly tenacious mental obsession. "This must come to me during meditation," he says, "and force me to get rid of it. I must feel myself surrounded by apparitions which talk to me, and move about me: otherwise I feel no inclination to write."

Nevertheless, there are true bursts of natural genius and spontaneous poetry in these earnest narrations, in which the powerful touches of the painting prevail over refined analysis. The

moments allowed the characters for reflection are short but effective. I was much interested in the account given by Claudius Umbo, who, having escaped from his pursuers after being carried to a distance, travels through unknown countries invaded by barbarians. A woman of the tribe of the Acatzires, who has lost her father, brothers, and husband in the *mêlée*, offers him a seat in her chariot; and together they perform the rite of invoking the moon. They travel, that is to say, they flee, across "a devastated country without resources and without inhabitants, through villages in ruins, heaps of *débris*, woods, swamps, and plains strewed with human bones whitened by the sun and rain, the remnants of the massacres which have depopulated these unfortunate countries." Bands of hungry and exasperated men pass like vultures over these deserted fields, killing and devouring whatever they find. One of these bands discovers the chariot in which Kolotza has just died of that pestilence which always accompanies great invasions. Just as Claudius is about to bury him, the band lay hold of the former, take out his oxen to eat them, rob the chariot, break it to pieces, and throw the corpse to the wolves. These flock around it as soon as

the bandits have departed. Claudius, wounded and fastened to the upright pole of the chariot, is restored to consciousness "by such a brilliant moonlight that the ground appears to be covered with snow." He breaks from his bonds, collects "the sad remains of Kolotza," and buries them as well as he can, beneath a stone.

"I could not tell you, Marius, in what part of Germany this tomb is situated. My life seems like a dream; and certain parts of this dream appear to have been swallowed up by the sinking in of a world."

A little farther on, I find a grandly drawn picture of the tragic side of the epoch. A hermit has received the fugitive dying with hunger, and is exhorting him to become an egotist. "Do you not see, my son, that the end of the world is approaching? Every thing is going simultaneously; the old and haughty empires are crumbling, and civilized nations no longer possess the earth. It is ravaged by strange men who will disappear in their turn; for they have not understood the gospel, and their deeds would shock Heaven. It would be impossible for you to find, in these times of desolation, the least happiness, even quietness, upon earth. Every thing is uncer-

tain. Property is now but a vain word, domestic life is a hell, and love a traffic. War is on all sides; and, to live in peace, one must lead the life of a troglodyte in the depths of the woods, and the excavations of rocks."

The character of Attila is drawn by a painter's hand. We see her, and almost love her, she is so lifelike and human. But I have said enough, and I ask the reader's pardon for having spoken of my son without excessive modesty. Still it appears to me that it would have been unjust to let affection prevent me from rendering him justice.

CHAPTER XVII.

BETWEEN TWO CLOUDS.

NOHANT, Dec. 3, 1872.

DURING the last fortnight of political excitement, minds have been in unison with the atmosphere, full of clouds and tempests ; for the weather exerts a greater influence than we think over the character and ideas of man.

In the midst of this deluge, which has confined us to the country, we have had some days as lovely as spring. The 21st of November and the 1st of December especially were real feasts of nature. The 1st of December, which was day before yesterday, I actually lived in forgetfulness of my age and my shoes. I walked with as much pleasure and animation as I could have done sixty years ago. This is interesting only to my children and friends, I know ; but, if I write about this walk, it is for the lovers of nature, as they used to say when I was young, with a slight hope and great desire to attract the attention of minds

too intent on every-day affairs. It is not necessary that these affairs should be forgotten, and that sociality should be destroyed; but when some fine opportunity is presented, like an invitation from the rosy sky and the verdant earth, then they might be laid aside; and a stupid fellow he who disdains or neglects such an opportunity!

At noon my son called to me, "The carriage is ready: the children are in, and asking for you."

"Has it entirely cleared off?"

"Yes. Don't you see that it has?"

"I was reading about the meeting."

"We will read about it as we go along. Hurry: fine days are rare now, and fine hours short."

I seized Jeannette, a garden-knife, a trowel, and I was ready. You all know what *Jeannette* is? No? If I should tell you that it is the box of Dillenius, you would think me very pedantic. I should think so too; so I much prefer the pretty little rural name which unpretending amateur botanists have given to this tin box painted green. It is hung on a leather strap, and carried under the arm, so that any particularly interesting plants may be brought home without fading.

To-day all the flowers were interesting, for

they were rare; besides, we left the calcareous for the granitic soil, and the flora here offers many specimens which we cannot find within the limits of a short drive.

Our first act was to arrange ourselves in the carriage, with our stock of tools. Mine were very modest, and took up little room, for I held them all in my lap. My son's were more considerable. In the first place, there was a *troubleau*, a kind of strong linen bag confined to an iron hoop, and furnished with a very unyielding handle; for this implement has rough work to do. It is intended to *mow* the thick, rough carpet of the brakes and heaths. I underline "mow," because it does not apparently mow, as it neither destroys nor injures a single plant. It works with a quick motion from right to left, like a scythe; but, in a skilful hand, it is not at all injurious to vegetation, for its use is to gather intact the delicate and interesting little creatures that have their abode here. These creatures, which are injurious to the trees of the forests, are all profit to the naturalist, who gathers thousands of young worms to take home in the very small *Jeannettes* which the entomologist carries in his pockets. They are kept, during the winter, in large boxes of wire-

gauze, and provided, every day, with suitable food. Among the worms thus gathered, many are perhaps devoid of interest. This can be ascertained when they have changed their skin several times. Some will surely be valuable ; for science is still far from knowing all the larvæ of the catalogued lepidoptera. It knows hardly any thing of their different conditions ; and, in consequence of this want of knowledge, it frequently mistakes varieties for species, and species for varieties. The caterpillar, so despised by those who do not understand its position in nature, is notwithstanding, in the mysterious existence of the insect, the real being that determines the species. It is already virtually male or female, and its foresight is now most developed. It knows nothing of love : it is preparing for another existence. After having chosen, with invariable discernment, the nourishment conducive to its development and its final *livery*, — sometimes glossy, sometimes prickly, and sometimes hairy ; sometimes of one color, and sometimes of another, — it spins or weaves the cocoon in which it is to be enclosed for its metamorphosis into a chrysalis, or else the thread by which it suspends the chrysalis. Certain very numerous species choose fine earth, damp or dry,

whichever is more suitable for burying the naked mummy.

These insects are everywhere, in the roots of all trees, in the rolled leaves or stems of all plants, in the veins of leaves, the interior of branches, the capsules of grain, the dust of dead trees, the glume of grasses, the mud of ponds, and the pith of reeds; in short, wherever there is an element of vegetation, animal vegetation awaits its birth, and introduces its existence.

Besides the *troubleau* for gathering the caterpillar, there was a large hamper on the top of the carriage, which was to bring back quite a little prairie of plants not produced in our calcareous soil, to be kept over winter. They are taken up in sods, and planted around the winter quarters of the caterpillars. We cannot make them live; but they will keep fresh long enough to furnish food for these voracious people. These plants are principally the broom, which is rather rare in our neighborhood. It is very pretty and very glossy; but its little leaves, its stems and calyxes, are covered with a silky white down, very rich under the magnifying-glass. Its delicate clusters were, this mild season, in blossom on the 1st of December.

We intended to bring home four species of the heath ; but one species, the prettiest in my opinion, we did not find. Perhaps I did not search thoroughly.

But this was not our whole freight. Our grand-daughters did not wish to deprive *their* children of so delightful a drive : so we had to find room for their dolls, besides cloaks, muffs, umbrellas, &c. Aurore had to take her *esparto* basket, also, to bring home specimens of natural history for her own use, round and rosy pebbles, tufts of microscopic mosses from which to form gardens and forests upon a plate, dried acorn-cups, and nutgalls, from which the little cynips that had produced them in spring had all disappeared. They have been metamorphosed into flies, and, towards the close of summer, have perforated their balls, in order to make their escape. Moreover, we considered that the children would be hungry and thirsty during the two hours ; and the luncheon-Jeannette took the place of honor among all the others.

The air was mild, the sun warm, and our horses swift. The earth was covered with the young grain like a thick carpet, through which the reddish soil was still visible. By the reflection of

the sun, which at this season comes nearer to caress the earth, this seemed like a coating of rich velvet upon the plain, which rises gradually from our dark valley. A light vapor silvered the distant landscape. Every little hollow was filled with water, and shone like a mirror. Flocks of ravens, as the rays of the sun struck upon their sleek plumage, glistened like carbuncles. Busy magpies were boring into the moist earth, and using very harsh language about trifles. Every one for himself—this is the party-motto.

You see that I am writing my journal through it all. These parliamentary disputes are the wind and rain of yesterday and to-morrow. The contest, viewed from afar, and in a general way, may be summed up in two dominant ideas, which are contending with each other.

Whatever shades of difference there may be, two opinions compose the national representation of the day. One maintains that man must submit to a principle of authority outside of himself; the other, that man must derive his authority from himself. Reason and truth are with the former, as also true religion. God did not suffer personal caprice to enter into his universal plan. If, on no occasion, he exercises an authority at

variance with the laws which he has established, he has never commissioned one of those microscopic beings, styling themselves the human race, to act in his place. It is very strange to see a fraction of them claiming the right to command in his name. Are they partly gods themselves? Do they partake, in the least, of the nature of angels, to secure our respect? I cannot see it, nor can any one else. These holy people have too much hatred, violence, and, above all, ingratitude, to convince us that our highest good consists in being under their whip and command.

The others are still wanting in union and discipline, although, in other respects, they may have made considerable progress. They do not represent, in sufficient numbers, the aspiration and determination of actual France; but their feeble majority answers to an immense majority, which will manifest itself better some other time, we may be sure, unless a conspiracy subverts our destiny. In the centre of these squalls I behold a ray of light. I will not compare M. Thiers to the sun; but, to my eyes, he shines with a light entirely unknown to history, which may serve as a spark for a new current of patriotic electricity. Here is a man who ranks love of country and

political honesty above every thing ; above himself, his own sympathies, his own beliefs, perhaps his own illusions ; making an abstraction of every thing for the sake of respecting human liberty as much as possible in these troublous times, when necessity seems to present such cruel obstacles. While monarchical Passion cries to the scandalized world, "God wills that this be accomplished for our benefit;" while the republican voice murmurs, with more sense, "Without liberty of conscience, there is no safety,"—an old man rises, and says, "You who are here, postpone your hopes ; you who are below, renounce your ambition. I stand before you, alone and disarmed. Tear me to pieces, crush me to powder : you will not make me deviate from that course wherein I believe lies the safety of France."

Whether this man might not be mistaken in details of more or less importance, is of little consequence to me at this momentous time. I behold something grand, a ruler of circumstance, who is alone in his party, that is, who represents the entire absence of prejudice, and who, precisely on this account, represents the spirit of France to-day : a fetich to some, an ideal of intellectual disinterestedness to others. Power of up-

rightness, we are not lost whilst thou shinest above our multifarious conflicts, whilst thou, without regard to the welfare of each, strivest for the welfare of all! This undertaking, which has not yet been made apparent, can be accomplished only in some unprecedented situation, like the present.

So this morning, with a breeze in expectation, we reached the pond which was the object of our two-hours' drive. At our approach, a flock of aquatic birds took to hasty flight across the fields, to conceal themselves among the reeds. We could not discover whether they were wild geese, wild ducks, herons, or storks. They were black above, and white underneath; but they uttered no sound which could betray their nationality. Moreover, our little ones did not allow us time to examine them. The pond, swollen by the rains, sent forth a stream into the prairies which were below its actual level. In summer, it has not this abundance, an attraction belonging to a later season, of which we were already aware, and which proved a source of delight to the children. The sparkling, limpid water rushed, bubbling and whirling, from its narrow channel, into the meadows, leaping over the granite rocks, where a

few sprigs of wild thyme were still blossoming amid the fresh, velvety moss, and forming lovely, foaming, noisy cascades. During the fine season, the place is insignificant, and the ground fearfully dry; but to-day it was unusually beautiful. Winter is pleasant in the country, whatever one may say to the contrary. It has its attractions.

These grounds have been considerably cleared up within the last few years, only certain spots retaining their character of solitude. Yet it is almost a wilderness, has few habitations, and a scattered population seldom visible. The slight eminences, which rise insensibly, are covered with a light growth of miserable grass, but are just now charming, a mild russet tone softening their outline. Profound silence reigns here. We entered the woods, the carriage following. In spite of the wet weather, the sandy, gravelly roads were dry and level. Along the roadsides were tufts of germander in melancholy foliage; a few of the flowers were still fresh, also a few branches of purple heath, and occasionally a beautiful violet scabious, fully expanded, and displaying, with an ambition perhaps out of place in December, its capitula in bud. The furzes were almost in blossom; these flower all winter. Delicate gar-

lands of creeping perforated Saint Johnswort, tracing figures upon the sand, intertwined with the dog-violet still green, great leaves of lungwort spotted with white, groups of young pines contrasting with the Florentine bronze of the withered leaves of the oak, completed the spectacle; while the autumnal dusk, gilded by the sun, cast over the whole scene an enchanting harmony. For a moment, the long avenues would lead us to fancy that spring had awakened, and was shivering at the extremities of the branches.

My son mowed with dexterity, while his daughters, seated upon stumps of oak-trees, where I had spread my cloak, merrily ate their luncheon. Sylvain followed with the carriage, sometimes wiping his foaming horses with the dried leaves, sometimes gathering the plants which were to fill the hamper. This was no slight load, with the earth clinging to the roots. I do not know whether the horses understood what was going on. They looked about, and followed of themselves, good-naturedly sniffing.

Sylvain has lived with us since 1845. He is rather more our master than our servant, but, when the children are of the party, is always in a good humor. He is extravagantly fond of them, and they reciprocate his affection.

After finishing our refreshments, we advanced into the woods. The young people ran about to their hearts' content, and gathered a thousand things which they assigned to some fantastic use. It was impossible to understand why their pockets were filled with stones and dead branches, which appeared the next day, and figured in their games, as if these stones and brushwood brought home from the drive had any particular value or signification. The wolves did not show themselves, although we searched for their tracks. It seems that they do not leave the thickets except when there is a thick fog. I observed my son sewing. What a singular idea! The *troubleau* had a hole, through which the caterpillars which had been captured were nimbly making their escape. He repaired the rent, and, in quite a perspiration, resumed his work. I do not know how he endured this gymnastic exercise for three hours. At last, the sun sank so low as to blind us with its red light. We started for home with a heavy load of sods, two or three hundred caterpillars, and a few little flowers. Hardly had the little girls entered the carriage when they stretched themselves out on the seat, were wrapped up, and, holding their dolls in their arms, fell fast asleep, and did not

wake till they reached home. But what appetites for dinner ! and what a ball in the evening, till nine o'clock !

This is how we celebrated the 1st of December, the end of a crisis which has but just commenced. Shall we become merry in three days ? Thus life flows between two threatening banks ; and when we have enjoyed a day of rest, sunlight, and hope, we say to ourselves that it has always been so. Is not this the general feeling ?

Let us accept these days of mercy and forgiveness. It must be God who gives them to us, since he has endowed us with a mind to appreciate their beauty, and a body to appreciate their benign influence. We have had beautiful nights too, when the heavens seemed to present a fairy spectacle. Did you see the shower of falling stars, at Paris, on the nights of the 27th and 28th of November ? Here there were clear spaces in the cloudy sky, enabling me to count twenty-eight shooting stars in two minutes, in the single constellation of Orion. A little later, a gust of wind sweeping over the whole heavens, it became impossible to count or see them all. In one spot, it seemed like a dance of lamps alternately lighted and extinguished at the extremity of their luminous

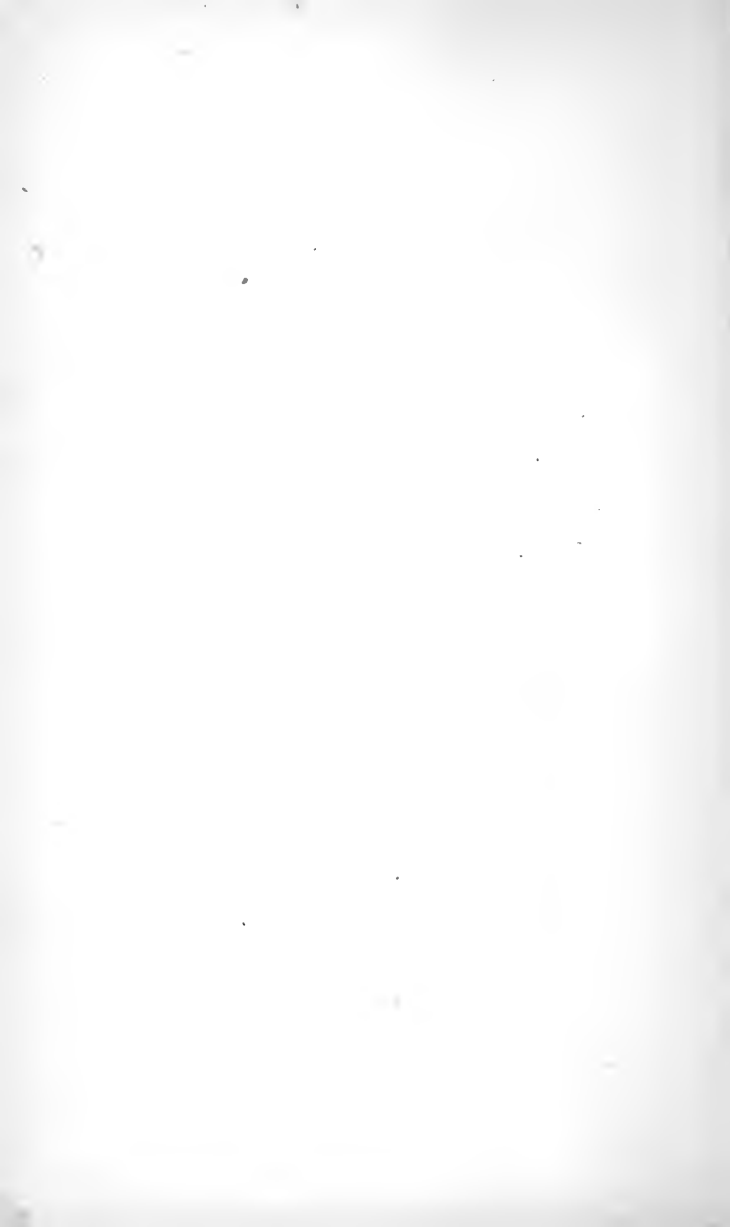
cords. It resembled a celestial *fête*, where, instead of flowers, stars were strewed along the path of some invisible deity. We were obliged, during the evening, to quiet the fears of our servants, who became very much alarmed.

But there is no *fête* without a morrow. We learn that, upon all the coasts, nature, which was so beautiful to behold in our tranquil valleys, was fierce and inclement. The rivers overflowed, and the sea was tempestuous. Man, however philosophical or resigned he may be, has no reason to be contented on earth; and we can understand his aspirations to find a refuge in some paradise arranged to his liking. It would have been sensible to say to him, "Hope, and you will suffer less;" but he has been told, "Continue to suffer, and hope for nothing in this world." The ignorant man tendered his resignation, while the skilful in the doctrine held uncontrolled sway, and gratified their longing to have command over this despicable world. They are the ones who, after having counted their flocks in pilgrimages, organize a combat, and throw the glove to the France of Voltaire and Rousseau. But no one will pick up this glove, for it is worn out; it is no longer fit for the use of the living of to-day: it belongs to

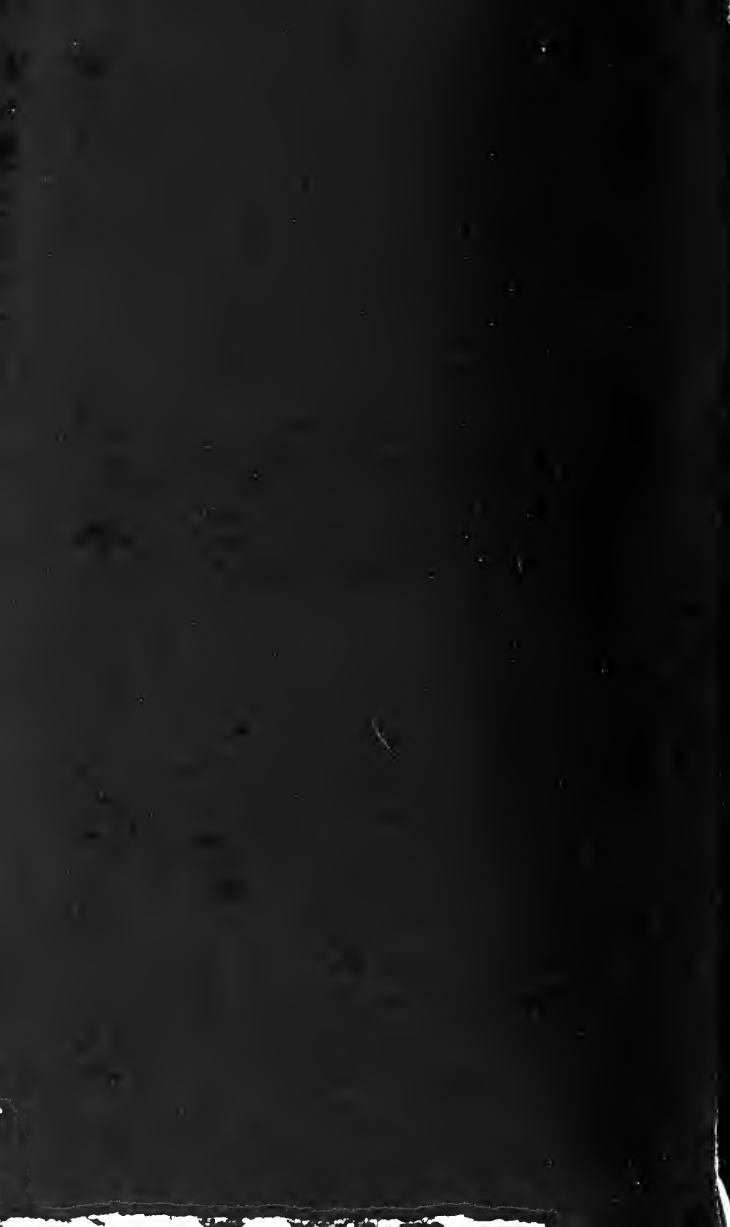
the skeleton of the past. There are dead doctrines which cannot be discussed. What ought to be protected is the divine right belonging to every upright conscience to govern itself, and to repulse any authority maintained by the most audacious, most guilty sacrilege that man could commit, the usurpation of power in the name of the Divinity. Wolves are more innocent. They eat sheep because they are hungry, just as snails eat flowers. Neither maintains that one of them has been elected by heaven to gratify his longing for combat, and domination over the others. Must we, then, forget the human race, and take up our abode with the animals of the forests and the fields?

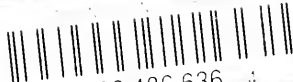
No; but let us observe that nature has a horror of what is false, and do not let us forget that man forms a part of nature. He claims to occupy the highest place: if he feed on falsehood, he will fall to the lowest.





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